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The Political Culture of Anti-Socialism in Britain

1900 - 1940

Liam Ryan

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirement
the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, School of Human

September 2018

70,740 words

Abstract

This thesis examines the political culture of anti-socialism in Britain between 1900 and 1940. Previous studies of the topic have examined its importance to the Conservative Party and specific intellectual movements like late-nineteenth century Individualism. The existing scholarship has largely judged anti-socialism in relation to its efficacy as a political strategy and relevance to intellectual debates about the changing nature of the state. This study argues that both approaches fail to capture the diversity of anti-socialism in early twentieth century Britain. It contends that anti-socialism was a complex political culture defined by strengths and weaknesses. The four decades between 1900 and 1940 witnessed the emergence of the Labour Party as a significant political force, the expansion of the trade union movement and the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution. The political culture of anti-socialism developed in reaction to these seismic developments. Confronted by sizeable social and political movements in favour of socialism for the first time, anti-socialists developed ideologies and practices that would resonate throughout the twentieth century.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor James Thompson for his support and encouragement over the four years it took to complete this PhD. I would also like to thank Claire Hamer and my parents.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE:.....

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List of Abbreviations

CSSU- Children's Social Sunday Union

FBI- Federation of British Industry

JIC- Joint Industrial Council

LCC- London County Council

NCSS- National Council of Social Service

Introduction

'The success of the Labour-Socialist candidates', declared a 1909 *Times* editorial retrospectively surveying the after effects of the 1906 general election, 'came as a shock, not only to the old political parties, but also to the general public'.¹ The article went on to warn about the attitude of complacency that had arisen in the intervening years after the election; the outwardly decorous and respectable behaviour of socialist parliamentarians masked 'an agitation of a different kind'. The 'extreme elasticity' of socialism and the multiplicity of its forms hindered the development of clear and effective opposition. Thomas Kirkup, an altogether more sympathetic observer than the right-wing *Times*, nevertheless agreed that socialism was marked by a variety of manifestations. United in one sense by a shared economic basis, calling for 'a fundamental change in the relation of labour to land and capital' the ideals and movements associated with the term socialism also decreed the necessity of change in relation to the 'political, ethical, technical and artistic arrangements....of society', which taken together would 'constitute a revolution greater than has ever taken place in human history'.²

The broadness of the socialist vision, which extended beyond adjustments to political and economic conventions, was also recognised by the Conservative politician and intellectual, Noel Skelton. Writing in 1923, Skelton, the figure who coined the phrase and developed the concept of the 'property owning democracy', spoke of the pressing need for Conservatives to expound clear and definable ideas in order to counter principles which offered 'a comprehensive view of life' that 'greatly extended the boundaries of politics'.³

¹ 'The Socialist Movement in Great Britain', *The Times* (London), 7 Jan. 1909.

² T. Kirkup, *A History of Socialism* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909), 10.

³ N. Skelton, 'Constructive Conservatism: II.- The New Era', *The Spectator*, (5 May. 1923), 744.

Fighting on the 'broadest of fronts', the task for its Conservative adversaries was to construct a rival and plausible 'view of life'.⁴

The belief that the growing prominence of socialism, or perhaps more accurately socialisms, in early twentieth-century Britain expanded the sites and frontiers of political activity is central to the analytical framing of this thesis. Socialist ideals possessed a transformative logic and nature that extended beyond the narrow purview of party politics. Socialists pledged to overturn private capital in favour of public ownership, sought to replace the materialistic and competitive urges of capitalism with the ethical communitarianism of cooperation, privileged structural rather than personal factors in the shaping of individual capabilities, looked to the creation of new ways of living and alternative selfhoods, and argued for greater parity of esteem for workers, women, and colonial peoples. These guiding principles presumed and incorporated seismic alterations to the existing character and constitution of society, culture, politics and economics. For its opponents, the all-encompassing nature of the socialist 'threat' meant that an adequate counter-response, however exaggerated and sensationalised it may now seem to contemporary observers in light of the labour movement's relative moderation, had to encapsulate key battlegrounds in civil society, organised religion, popular culture, and intellectual debate as well as party politics. This formative characteristic of anti-socialist thought and activism provides the central framing mechanism and justification for undertaking this thesis.

K.D. Brown's influential 1974 edited collection *Essays in Anti-Labour History* prefigured some of the major concerns and issues raised in this thesis.⁵ The essays in this work addressed

⁴ Skelton, 'Constructive', 744.

⁵ K.D. Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1974).

the 'common theme of how representatives of the older political traditions reacted to the rise of an independent labour movement in Britain'.⁶ Much has changed in a historiographical sense since this collection was published four-and-a-half decades ago with dominant interpretations relating to the forward march of Labour, the connected decline of the Liberal Party, and the Conservative reliance on suburban 'Villa Toryism' all being convincingly challenged and reassessed.⁷ *Essays in Anti-Labour History* was very much a product of its time, reflecting the prevailing influence of the 'rise of class politics' thesis, which contended that the late-Victorian and Edwardian period had witnessed a fundamental realignment of politics along the lines of class and material interest.⁸ Pieces by K.D. Brown, Michael Bentley and Nicholas Seldon, for example, probed the anxieties of Conservatives, Liberals and anti-socialist organisations as they came to grips with 'the growth of collectivist sentiment and the politicisation of the working classes', developments which ultimately found political

⁶ 'Introduction', in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, 1.

⁷ For challenges relating to Labour's inevitable rise and the corresponding decline of Liberalism see D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); E. F. Biagini & A.J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism, Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); J. Lawrence, 'Popular Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 2 (1992), 163-186; *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); J.R. Moore, *The Transformation of Urban Liberalism: Party Politics and Urban Governance in Late-Nineteenth Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006); M. Roberts, *Political Movements in Urban England, 1832-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2009); For critiques of 'Villa Toryism' that highlight the depth of working class support for the Conservative Party see J. Lawrence, 'Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914', *English Historical Review*, 108 (1993), 629-652; M. Roberts, 'Villa Toryism and Popular Conservatism in Leeds, 1885-1902', *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 217-246; A. Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, 1868-1906* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007); D. Thackeray, *Conservatism for the Democratic Age Conservative Cultures and the Challenges of Mass Politics in Early Twentieth Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁸ For the labour history view see examples like J. Belchem, *Class, Party, and the Political System in Britain, 1867-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1990), 3-6; K. Laybourn & J. Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour, 1890-1918* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984); H. Pelling, 'Labour and the Downfall of Liberalism', in H. Pelling (ed.), *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain*, (London: MacMillan, 1968), p. 120; For Marxism see E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The Making of the Working Class, 1870-1914', in E.J. Hobsbawm (ed.), *Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), 194-214; For electoral sociology see P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); K.D. Wald, *Crosses on the Ballot: Patterns of British Voter Alignment since 1885* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

expression in the form of the Labour Party.⁹ A rich vein of scholarship in the last thirty years or so, much of it registering the influence of the wider linguistic/cultural turn in the humanities and social sciences, has largely overturned assumptions pertaining to the inevitable class-based rise of Labour, accentuating instead the importance of locality, language and stressing the movement's debt to the idioms and principles of the radical-liberal tradition.¹⁰ Scholars are now more likely to define socialism as a complex and kaleidoscopic set of political ideas as opposed to the apogee of working-class consciousness.¹¹

This thesis asks the question of what anti-socialism looks like in the wake of these theoretical and historiographical developments that have decoupled the strict association of socialism with the developed class consciousness of an organised labour movement. How did anti-socialists perceive of socialism? What underpinned their anxieties and fears? Did they believe that the working-class majority would instinctively vote for socialist candidates or was socialism, never merely a creed of material self-interest, perceived to be a threat to prevailing social, cultural and religious norms? What forms did anti-socialist activism take? Was anti-socialism popular or did it exist on the margins of political debate? This study answers these

⁹ K.D. Brown, 'The Anti-Socialist Union, 1908-49', in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, 234-262; M. Bentley, 'The Liberal Response to Socialism, 1918-1929', in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, 42-74; N. Soldon, 'Laissez-Faire as Dogma: The Liberty and Property Defence League, 1882-1914', in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, 208-234.

¹⁰ For this scholarship see the first half of footnote 7

¹¹ For the diversity of British socialism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries see D. Tanner, 'Ideological debate in Edwardian labour politics: radicalism, Revisionism and socialism', in Biagini & Reid (eds.), *Currents*, 271-293; 'The Development of British Socialism, 1900-1918', in E.H.H. Green (ed.), *An Age of Transition: British Politics, 1880-1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 48-67; L. Barrow, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack : Englishness, Patriotism and the British left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1998); M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); J. Thompson, 'The British left in European perspective, c. 1880-1914', *Global Intellectual History*, (2018), 1-12.

questions through an examination of the mentalities, values and practices of anti-socialism in Britain between 1900 and 1940, in short, an investigation of its political culture.

Why this time period? Anti-Socialist anxieties were especially raw and prominent during the first four decades of the twentieth century as its exponents were forced to come to grips with the foundation and growing political prominence of the Labour Party, the threat of international and indigenous communist currents in the wake of the victory of the Russian Revolution, the expansion of the trade union movement, and the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s which damaged the effectiveness and credibility of the capitalist system. The perception that political, economic and industrial developments were moving in an avowedly socialist direction was also influenced by the realities of mass democracy - many anti-socialists did fear that the working class majority would use their vote to advance material aims through the means of the labour movement -and the growing tendency of parties and government authorities to enact social reform measures that countenanced an enhanced role for the state in the lives of individuals.¹² Owing to the confluence of these factors, the topics of socialism and socialists became matters of heated intellectual discussion and objects of both praise and derision in popular culture and civil society. Anti-Socialists in Britain possessed few indigenous reference points for what happened when movements, individuals and parties inspired by socialism attained power of a substantial kind. The embryonic nature of much of the anti-socialist response and challenge in the first four decades of the twentieth century accounts for the chosen periodisation in this thesis. Encountering a sizeable and influential socialist movement between 1900 and 1940, anti-socialists constructed ideas, strategies and

¹² For the connection between democracy and anti-socialism see R. McKibbin, *Parties and People: England, 1914-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 36-37; Jon Lawrence has also alluded to the fact that Edwardian political observers feared that the labour movement 'threatened to reduce politics to questions of class interest and class loyalty'; see Lawrence, *Speaking*, 265.

tactics that would resonate throughout the twentieth century, especially as politics became organised around the central dichotomy of socialist versus anti-socialist.

One objection to this periodisation may centre on the fact that the Labour Party was not formally socialist until 1918 with the adoption of Clause IV at that year's national conference. Prior to this point, however, anti-socialists, of the variety encountered in this study, argued either that the existence of the party was reflective of growing 'socialistic' tendencies in wider society or just simply labelled the party socialist, often utilising the moniker of 'Labour-Socialist'.¹³ Contrary to the arguments of Laura Beers, David Jarvis and E.H.H. Green, who examine this naming strategy as a phenomenon of the interwar period, the moniker Labour-Socialist was very much a feature of Edwardian politics.¹⁴ Conservatives, pressure groups such as the Anti-Socialist Union and the national right-wing press used this naming strategy to delegitimise the claims of the nascent Labour Party.¹⁵

This study makes a number of key arguments. The first pertains to the relatively straightforward contention that socialism, whether represented politically by the Labour Party, industrially, by militant sections of the trade union movement, religiously, by Christian Socialism, educationally, by the Socialist Sunday Schools, culturally, by the Clarion movement,

¹³ For the view that Labour was the product of 'socialistic tendencies' see E. Hume, 'The Advent of Socialism', *Fortnightly Review*, 47, (Mar. 1906), 475-486; for a perspective that asserted 'that the underlying principle and motive power of the Labour Party is true socialism' see H. Seton-Karr, 'The Labour Party-a Unionist View', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 59, (Mar. 1906), 477; For the use of label of labour-socialist or alternatively socialist-labour see 'The Wastrels', *Daily Mail* (London), 23 Oct. 1906; 'Socialist Candidates', *Daily Mail* (London), 11 Jan. 1907; 'Dr McNamara and Socialism', *The Times* (London), 5 Nov. 1907; for the more direct label of socialist party see J.A.R. Marriott, 'The "Right to Work"', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 63, (Jan-Jun. 1908), 1003.

¹⁴ D. Jarvis, 'Stanley Baldwin and the Ideology of the Conservative Response to Socialism, 1918-1931', (PhD Dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1991), 86; E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126; L. Beers, 'Counter-Toryism: Labour's response to anti-socialist propaganda, 1918-1939', in Matthew Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the Labour Party: Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 235-236; *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 56-57.

¹⁵ For evidence of this strategy in the Anti-Socialist Union see 'Impressions of Labour Conference', *The Anti-Socialist* (London), Mar. 1909.

or intellectually by Marxists, Fabians, ethical and guild socialists, generated a great degree of hostility in early-twentieth century Britain. This assertion may appear obvious, but it is one that has rarely been considered in any great detail outside of studies dealing with the Conservative Party and related intellectual movements such as Individualism.¹⁶ This thesis captures a broader range of anti-socialist mentalities than in previous studies.

The second, closely linked, argument emphasises the diversity of anti-socialist political culture, which extended beyond the narrow parameters of Conservatism and Individualism, and was inclusive of perspectives in rival political parties, popular newspapers, literary culture and voluntary associations. Liberal anti-socialism, an ideological tendency that has often been underplayed in recent scholarship, will be explored here, especially in the Edwardian period, when the party sat in government and drove much of the political agenda.¹⁷ The prominent presence of anti-socialism in civil society will also be investigated, particularly with regards to middle class voluntary organisations. This specific facet of civil society has been chosen because of its relevance to the existing scholarship on anti-socialism. Challenging interpretations that emphasise the progressive and non-political character of middle-class voluntarism, this thesis highlights the implicit anti-socialism of organisations like Rotary

¹⁶ These historiographies will be explored in the literature review section of the introduction.

¹⁷ Scholars, while not denying the existence of Liberal anti-socialism, have paid far more attention to the similarities and connections that united new liberals, radicals and socialists in a broader progressive movement in the early twentieth century. For pioneering work on New Liberalism see S. Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology: L. T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England, 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); P. Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); M. Freeden, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); For a more recent account of socialist and liberal thought within a progressive framework see B. Jackson, *Equality and the British Left: A study in progressive thought, 1900-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); For a recent work stressing the pervasive radical influence on the Labour Party see J. Lawrence, 'Labour and the Politics of Class, 1900-1940', in D. Feldman and J. Lawrence (eds.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Finally, for accounts of Liberal anti-socialism, which have especially focused on local contexts in the immediate period before the First World War see G. Bernstein, 'Liberalism and the Progressive Alliance in the Constituencies, 1900-1914: Three Case Studies', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), 623-640; see K. O. Morgan, 'The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour: The Welsh Experience, 1885-1929', in Brown (ed.), *Essays*, 167-174; Tanner, *Political Change*, 284-296.

International. Contrastingly, it also demonstrates the overt anti-collectivism of the Mothers' Union.¹⁸ Thirdly, this thesis argues that strident, campaigning forms of anti-socialism proved much less effective than more subtle versions. Critiques that directly and crudely attacked the socialist movement failed to gain popular support. Conversely, more nuanced types of anti-socialism that singled out specific targets such as the revolutionary agitator and the Bolshevik militant generally met with some degree of success. This argument will be developed in the final chapter of this thesis which looks at two prominent anti-socialist character archetypes in popular fiction between 1900 and 1940. The tropes of the champagne socialist and the socialist agitator pervaded the writings of Agatha Christie, John Buchan, Dorothy Sayers and G.K. Chesterton in the early twentieth century.

Literature Review

The subject of anti-socialism has understandably featured heavily in the existing historiography of the Conservative Party in the early twentieth century, incorporating perspectives at high, popular and local levels. Two main lines of analysis can be identified in this body of scholarship. The first centres on a profoundly negative set of discourses and practices that sought to exploit the materialistic fears of middle- and upper-class property owners, invoked the authority of the constitution and the rule of law and order, attacked the selfish, sectionalised behaviour of organised labour during strikes, and produced lurid propaganda that linked labour leaders with continental extremists, atheism and

¹⁸ The accounts challenged here include R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). 96-98; H. McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), 891-912; 'Service Clubs, Citizenship and Equality: Gender Relations and Middle-Class Associations in Britain Between the Wars', *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), 531-552;

unconventional sexual practices such as free love. The second investigates a more positive form of anti-socialism which emphasised the necessity of social reform measures to undercut the appeal of the New Liberalism and the Labour Party in the Edwardian period, deployed consensual languages to attract support from all groups in society, celebrated the 'common sense' of newly enfranchised female voters after 1918, applied targeted electioneering strategies that recognised the diversity of working class voters and constituencies, and continued to uphold the benefits of tradition and conventional values.

These two anti-socialist strategies are judged primarily in terms of their instrumental value to the Conservative Party and consequently integrated within broader political and electoral narratives. During the so-called Edwardian 'Crisis of Conservatism', for example, where the Tories suffered three successive defeats at general elections and were internally divided and factionalised by disagreements over tariff reform, Irish Home Rule and the role of the House of Lords vis-a-vis the Commons, anti-socialism, whether of the negative or positive variety, is depicted as providing very little political capital for the party. For Alan Sykes, divisions between unionist free traders and tariff reformers over the issue of anti-socialism, the first group favouring the negative stance of associating the Liberals with socialism as a means of provoking middle-class anxiety and the second advocates of the party reclaiming its Disraelian social reform heritage in industrial constituencies, were symptomatic of the wider malaise and divisions afflicting the effectiveness of Edwardian Conservatism.¹⁹ In his 1992 PhD thesis examining the role of anti-socialism in British politics, J.N. Peters argued that the Conservative critique of socialism, 'constructed between 1906 and 1914', provoked further discord within the party, 'rather than acting as a healing force'.²⁰ Homing in, too, on the

¹⁹ A. Sykes, *Tariff Reform in British Politics, 1903-1913* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 115-45.

²⁰ J.N. Peters, 'Anti-Socialism in British Politics, 1900-1922', (PhD Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1992), 212.

differences between free traders and tariff reformers, he asserted that both 'offered mutually antagonistic remedies' based on their stance in the fiscal debate, be it the latter's traditional libertarianism or the former's 'collectivist economic nationalism'.²¹ In his excellent 1995 study *the Crisis of Conservatism*, E.H.H. Green contended that the radical conservative promotion of tariff reform, which had gained precedence over supporters of free trade and individualism in the party after 1906, as an 'anti-socialist social reform project' failed to decisively impede the Progressive alliance's capture of the working-class vote.²²

This tendency to judge anti-socialism in relation to its efficacy as a political and electoral strategy has also been observable in studies dealing with the subject of Edwardian popular conservatism. Jon Lawrence, in his influential 1993 article examining the importance of class and gender identities to popular urban Conservatism, argued that the domestic and feminised anti-socialist rhetoric of organisations like the Primrose League failed to undermine the credibility of 'Liberal collectivism', primarily because most Conservatives, themselves thought of social reform as a necessity.²³ More recently, David Thackeray has asserted that anti-socialism possessed little purchase outside specific locales like London where voters were confronted with falling property values and rising interest rates.²⁴ Thackeray's argument attests to the key significance of London politics to the historiography of Edwardian anti-socialism, particularly the critical county council election of 1907 where the Tory-aligned

²¹ Peters, 'Anti-Socialism', 213.

²² E.H.H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the Conservative Party, 1880-1914* (London: Routledge, 1995), 266; for tariff reform as an anti-socialist policy see also his earlier article 'Radical Conservatism: The Electoral Genesis of Tariff Reform', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 686; for a contrasting account of tariff reform's anti-socialist ramifications see M. Fforde, *Conservatism and Collectivism, 1886-1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 90.

²³ Lawrence, 'Class and Gender', 651; For another study pertaining to the weakness of anti-socialism in popular conservatism see F. Coetzee, *For Party or Country: Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Popular Conservatism in Edwardian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 99-106

²⁴ Thackeray, *Conservatism*, 55-56; In making this claim Thackeray drew on the earlier work of David Jarvis and Ross McKibbin; see D. Jarvis 'British Conservatism and Class Politics in the 1920s', *English Historical Review*, 440 (1996), 66-67; McKibbin, *Parties*, 10.

Municipal Reform Party, campaigning on the themes of high rates and wasteful expenditure, wrestled political control away from the sitting Progressive administration, a broad alliance composed of radicals, liberals and socialists.²⁵ Contesting the efforts of socialists and progressives, who saw local government as the testing ground for collectivist policies and the key arena where decisions about unemployment, housing and the poor law were made, municipal reformers in London, and across the country, preached the benefits of economy, worried about the ability of councils to manage utilities like gas and water, opposed the corresponding rate and debt increases, and maintained that municipalised industry would 'crowd out' private enterprise and investment in certain economic sectors.²⁶

Studies of interwar conservatism, by contrast, emphasise the centrality of anti-socialism to the party's domination of British politics in the 1920s and 1930s. Maurice Cowling's 1971 work *The Impact of Labour* established a historiographical precedent in this regard, arguing that 'resistance to socialism' became the defining feature of Conservative interwar politics, a process that first materialised in the immediate years following the end of the First World War in 1918.²⁷ Ross McKibbin, in his well-known 1990 essay 'Class and Conventional Wisdom', placed great weight on the importance of anti-waste rhetoric in the

²⁵ The historiography covering the 1907 LCC election is vast, see the following works; K. Young, *Local Politics and the Rise of Party: The London Municipal Society and the Conservative Intervention in Local Elections 1894-1963* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1975), 93-97; P. Thompson, *Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London, 1885-1914* (London: Routledge, 1967), 179-183; S. Pennybacker, *A Vision for London, 1889-1914: Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 28-9; Avner Offer, *Property and Politics: Landownership, Law, Ideology and urban development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 301-308; Newer work has looked at the visual politics of the election J. Thompson, 'The Lights of the Electric Octopus Have Been Switched Off': Visual and Political Culture in Edwardian London', *Twentieth Century British History*, 29 (2017), 331-356.

²⁶ J.P. Gerhke, 'Municipal Anti-Socialism and the Growth of the Anti-Socialist Critique in Britain, 1873-1914' (PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2006) 'Georgist Thought and the Emergence of Municipal Socialism in Britain, 1870-1914', <http://schalkenbach.org/scholars-forum/MunicipalSocialism-in-Britain-J-Gehrke.pdf> [accessed 10 July 2017]; E. Robinson, 'Defining Progressive Politics: Municipal Socialism and Anti-Socialism in Contestation, 1889-1939', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 76 (2015), 609-631.

²⁷ M. Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924: the Beginning of Modern British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 1; E.H.H. Green is also good on this point see Green, *Ideologies*, 132.

early 1920s, identifying its persistence in the deflationary political economy favoured by Tories throughout the interwar period. Conservative electoral predominance between the wars could not be satisfactorily explained by its commitment to deflation, however, which objectively benefited the 'professional and commercial suburban middle classes' but was in fact rooted in the discursive construction of ideological stereotypes, characterised by an overt hostility to the politics and culture of organised labour, that 'mobilised...nearly all those who were not working class and then much of the working class as well'.²⁸

Expanding upon this theme in 1998's *Classes and Cultures*, McKibbin asserted that middle class associational culture expanded the support base of Conservatism through its promotion of non-political habits and values.²⁹ The development of this 'apolitical sociability' united a formerly-fragmented middle-class, politically, socially and religiously speaking, in support of the Conservative Party; an alliance ultimately held together by a cloaked hostility to organised labour, co-operative societies and the Labour Party.³⁰ David Jarvis built upon McKibbin's insights, locating Conservative success in its ability to construct positive ideological appeals that recognised the diversity of working class audiences and contrasted the homely, domestic wisdom of female voters with the aggressive masculinity of trade union and Labour Party culture.³¹

Philip Williamson's 1999 biography of Stanley Baldwin emphasised the ability of the Conservative leader to craft a language and leadership style that exuded qualities of

²⁸ R. McKibbin, 'Class and Conventional Wisdom: The Conservative Party and the 'Public' in Inter-War Britain', in R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 267-70, 292-293.

²⁹ McKibbin, *Classes*, 96

³⁰ McKibbin, *Classes*, 96.

³¹ Jarvis, 'British Conservatism', 66; D. Jarvis, Mrs Maggs and Betty: The Conservative Appeal to Women Voters in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5 (1994), 144-145.

moderation, patriotism and unanimity whilst never being politically neutral, heaping especial scorn on forms of behaviour that catered to instincts of class-based selfishness.³² Williamson's study constituted a direct riposte to the negative tenor of McKibbin's arguments, arguing that Conservative success in the interwar years was not predicated on the construction of ideological stereotypes that portrayed the organised working classes in inimical terms. Primarily concerned with Conservative organisational adaption to the challenges of mass democracy, Neal McCrillis' *The British Conservative Party in the Age of Universal Suffrage* highlighted the anti-socialist outlook and strategies of various strata of the party and included important work on Conservative youth groups.³³ Stuart Ball's recent detailed study of the interwar party impressively investigates the conservative critique of socialism, which consisted of two parallel perspectives rooted in positive and negative arguments and shows how many of these fears were attributable to the social distance that separated most party activists from the organised working classes.³⁴ He also makes the important argument that Conservative anti-socialism became less strident and more restrained in the 1930s, centring on memories of the political and economic incompetence of the second Labour administration.³⁵ Finally, newer studies have also investigated the nature of Labour's response to anti-socialist propaganda, claiming that it forced local conservatives to root their appeals in the material and local interests of industrial, suburban and rural communities.³⁶

³² P. Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 177.

³³ N.R. McCrillis, *The British Conservative Party in the Age of Universal Suffrage: Popular Conservatism 1918-1929* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1998), 83-110.

³⁴ S. Ball, *Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 54-55, 55-65.

³⁵ Ball, *Portrait*, 91; a point also made in Geraint Thomas' PhD thesis examining local Conservative activism in the 1930s; see G. Thomas, 'Conservatives and the culture of 'National' government between the wars', (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2010), 28.

³⁶ Thomas, 'Conservatives', 96-121, 163-198; Thackeray, *Conservatism*, 54; on Labour's response to anti-socialism see also Beers, 'Counter Toryism', 231-268.

What are the gaps in this body of scholarship that demand a comprehensive account of the political culture of anti-socialism in the early twentieth century? The first relates to the central contention of the thesis that the wide-ranging vision and challenge of socialism provoked a requisite response that was not confined to the boundaries of any one political party tradition or movement. Utilising this logic, we can say that the extensive focus on Conservative anti-socialism has come at an interpretive cost, obscuring rival political visions and the variegated nature of anti-socialist identity in the early twentieth century. The wider development of Liberal anti-socialism is especially relevant to this point, as it was an important facet of the party's ideology in the early twentieth century. The thesis, however, does engage with the subject of the Conservative Party, to not do so would leave any study of anti-socialism substantially weaker. The party's central position in the movement against early twentieth century socialism will be explored and placed within the context of a wider political culture. This focus on culture rather than party allows the study to examine the role of smaller right-wing organisations that operated within the broader orbit of Conservatism but operated largely independent of the central party, and at times even clashed with it over the issue of anti-socialism. Conservative organisations and politicians could license and reject various forms of anti-socialism due to the party's strength within this wider political culture. The thesis reverses the logic of Conservative party scholarship, and takes as its main focus the development of anti-socialism in civil society, literature and intellectual debate. It examines how these currents related to and even benefited the political tradition of Conservatism but does not treat them as merely supportive appendages ultimately contributing either to the party's failures or successes in the early twentieth century.

The second major issue with the Conservative scholarship relates to its periodisation. The periodisation demanded by the explanatory frameworks of Edwardian 'crisis' and

interwar 'hegemony' mean that anti-socialism is marked by a fundamental discontinuity in Conservative historiography. Studies are usually positioned between two key reference points such as the beginning of the tariff reform campaign in 1903 and its end ten years later in 1913, the burgeoning development of late-Victorian Conservative hegemony in the 1880s and the start of the First World War in 1914, Labour's breakthrough at the Spen Valley by-election in 1920 and the Red Scare general election of 1924, focus entirely on a specific decade like the 1920s, or span the entirety of the interwar period from 1918 to 1939, or continue to the end of the Second World War itself in 1945.³⁷ Such boundaries result in insufficient attention being paid to the continuities that existed between Edwardian and interwar forms of anti-socialism, especially in relation to the consistency of its ideological character. As Jarvis noted in his 1991 thesis, 'the crux of the post-war Conservative anti-socialist dilemma concerned not the need to respond to socialism per se, but rather the need to adapt a largely pre-existing set of responses to changed circumstances', few of its ideas 'had not been developed to some extent before the war'.³⁸ This issue of continuity is significant, the Labour-Socialist naming strategy cited above providing one major example, and illustrates that Edwardian Conservatives were developing anti-socialist strategies and tactics that the party would eventually utilise to great effect in the interwar years.³⁹ The study develops this theme of anti-socialist continuity in the second chapter, which examines the ideological and personal networks that underpinned a

³⁷ Alan Sykes' study *Tariff Reform in British Politics* spans the years from 1903 to 1913, E.H.H. Green's *The Crisis of Conservatism* covers the years between the 1880s and 1914, Maurice Cowling's *The Impact of Labour* was set between 1920 and 1924, David Jarvis' work was largely concerned with the 1920s, McKibbin's essay 'Class and Conventional Wisdom' covered the two decades between 1918 and 1939 while Stuart Ball's *Portrait of a Party* starts at the former date and ends in 1945.

³⁸ Jarvis, 'Stanley', 60.

³⁹ On this point specifically see 'Faction and Failure: 1905-1910', in S. Ball & A. Seldon., (eds.), *Recovering Power: The Conservative Party in Opposition since 1867* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 108; for another account stressing Conservative recovery in the Edwardian period see D. Thackeray, 'Rethinking the Edwardian Crisis of Conservatism', *Historical Journal*, 54 (2011), 191-213.

campaign to close down socialist and communist Sunday schools in Britain between 1907 and 1927.

The study of late nineteenth and early twentieth century individualist ideology and politics is another historiographical area where works pertaining to the subject of anti-socialism abound. Reacting against the perceived rise of 'socialistic' influences in society and politics, perhaps best illustrated by the increasing acceptability of state trading and the 'constructivist' legislation of Gladstone's second Liberal government 1880-85 which undermined the freedom of contract principle, individualists staunchly defended laissez faire, the rights of property, negative interpretations of liberty and remained steadfastly committed to the doctrines of orthodox political economy, ignoring late-nineteenth theoretical innovations as espoused by proponents of marginalism and the historical school. Most of this scholarship, with a number of notable exceptions, evaluates the anti-socialism of the individualists with regards to the wider ideological trajectory of conservatism.⁴⁰ In the 1980s, spurred on by the contemporary prominence of economic and political individualism in the Conservative Party, a number of scholars began to look for the possible ideological antecedents of Thatcherism. Writing in 1983, in the second part of his multivolume series investigating the development of the 'British political tradition', W.H. Greenleaf argued for the existence of a specifically Conservative strain of libertarian thought that stretched as far back as the late eighteenth century.⁴¹ For Greenleaf, Thatcherism was but its latest manifestation and the individualist movement had kept the flame of this free market and limited state 'tradition' alive in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period when it appeared to be beset on

⁴⁰ Collini, *Liberalism*, 17-51; N. Seldon, 'Laissez-Faire as Dogma',

⁴¹ W.H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition: Vol. II, The Ideological Heritage* (Oxford: Routledge, 1983), 263, 339.

all sides by collectivist ideologies.⁴² A related desire to trace the possible Victorian roots of Thatcherite political economy provided the initial impetus for Michael Taylor's 1992 work examining the thought of Herbert Spencer and late-nineteenth century individualism, which began life as a PhD thesis under the supervision of Michael Freeden at Oxford.⁴³ This drive to find a potential 'apostolic succession' of leading 'anti-statist thinkers' was undermined by evidence which demonstrated that the various thinkers and organisations associated with the political and economic project of Thatcherism had exhibited little to no interest in late-nineteenth century individualism, deriving their primary inspiration from the later writings of Friedrich Hayek.⁴⁴

The impression we get of anti-socialism in these accounts is one of reaction, marginality, extremism and ultimately, failure. Anti-Socialism appears as an outlier on the fringes of political debate, unable to impede the growing prominence of collectivist values and hampered by its doctrinal obsolescence. Individualism certainly existed in isolation from the dominant strains of political thought in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period, which largely accepted an increased role for state action. Individualist pressure groups inspired by the teachings of Herbert Spencer, as Stefan Collini notes, were 'recognised at the time to be extreme'.⁴⁵ Their dogmatic adherence to laissez faire, however, was not generally typical of anti-socialist political culture, which tolerated and sometimes embraced statist social reform as a means of undercutting the perceived appeal of socialism, and later on, communism. This thesis places individualism within the context of a broader political culture and asserts that it

⁴² Greenleaf, *The British*, 272-275.

⁴³ This desire is mentioned in the preface to the book. See M.W. Taylor, *Men Versus the State, Herbert Spencer and Late Victorian Individualism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

⁴⁴ M.W. Taylor, 'Herbert Spencer: nineteenth-century politics and twentieth century individualism', in M. Francis & M.W. Taylor (eds.), *Herbert Spencer: Legacies* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), 46.

⁴⁵ Collini, *Liberalism*, 17.

was just one anti-socialist tendency amongst a rich array of rival visions. It also challenges the presumption implicit in this historiography that anti-socialism was a worldview defined solely by its marginality. The political culture of anti-socialism was complex and was marked by both strengths and weaknesses.

Methodology

This study investigates the values, attitudes and practices that informed the political culture of anti-socialism in Britain between 1900 and 1940. Political culture, here, is used to denote an approach interested in broadening conceptions of the political, moving away from a strict focus on party and situating politics within the contexts of culture and society, and indicates a related concern with subjective dispositions like mentalities and belief systems.⁴⁶ Such insights have been developed most fully in the context of modern British history by scholars associated with the 'New Political History'. Reacting against older interpretations that emphasised the determination of politics by material and sociological factors, exponents of the 'New Political History' accentuate the importance of language, stress the irreducibility of the political to some pre-existing socio-economic 'reality', place a premium on the value of political communication in the forms of posters, banners, newspapers and meetings, and are generally interested in relating politics back to wider developments in society and culture.⁴⁷ The roots of the 'New Political History' are conventionally traced back to the publication of

⁴⁶ R.P. Formisano, 'The Concept of Political Culture', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31 (2001), 393-426; Other useful discussions of political culture can be found in the following, J. Lawrence, 'Political History', in S. Berger, H. Feldner & K. Passmore (eds.), *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 218-219; L. Black, *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-7.

⁴⁷ Works outlining the modus operandi of the New Political History include D. Wahrman, 'The new political history: a review essay', *Social History*, 21 (1996), 343-354; J. Lawrence & M. Taylor, 'Electoral Sociology and the Historians', in M. Taylor & J. Lawrence (eds.), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 18-19; L. Black, 'Popular Politics in Modern British History', *Journal of British Studies*, 40 (2001), 431-455; S. Fielding, 'Looking for the 'New Political History'', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42 (2007), 515-524; M. Roberts, *Political Movements*, 7-9.

Gareth Stedman Jones' ground-breaking essay 'Rethinking Chartism' in 1982. Challenging the then dominant contention that Chartism was an expression of proletarian class consciousness, Stedman Jones, a scholar who had previously worked within the Marxist tradition, asserted that an analysis of the movement's language, of what Chartists 'actually said or wrote', demonstrated that its aims were political rather than social and economic in character.⁴⁸ The success of any political movement was contingent on its ability to construct vocabularies that embedded themselves 'in the assumptions of masses of people', conveying a hope of a practicable alternative and a 'believable means of realising it, such that potential recruits can think within its terms'.⁴⁹ Never merely the manifestation and expression of social experience, as Rohan McWilliam put it; the role of politics was to 'provide a set of languages and set of ideas that help individuals make sense of society'.⁵⁰

The implications of Stedman Jones' work were taken in a more explicitly post-structuralist direction in the 1990s by Patrick Joyce and James Vernon, both clearly emphasising the prefigurative role of language, 'creating both political appeals and the objects of such appeals', the instability of meaning and a Derridean focus on the play of differences within texts.⁵¹ Both scholars also defined language in the broad sense of a 'sign system', in contrast to Stedman Jones' focus on formal political texts, incorporating into their work then novel sources such as dialect literature, popular art, ballads, cartoons, handbill statues and architecture.⁵² In some criticism, Joyce and Vernon have harshly been deemed linguistic

⁴⁸ G.S. Jones, 'Rethinking Chartism' in *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 94.

⁴⁹ Jones, 'Rethinking', 96.

⁵⁰ R. McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 1998), 33.

⁵¹ P. Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 27; J. Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, 1815-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4-5

⁵² Joyce, *Visions*, 17; Vernon, *Politics*, 4.

determinists, replicating the reductionism of earlier social historians and neglecting vital issues of reception, but the latter, in particular, does pay attention to the manner in which popular political actors could subvert the logic of dominant discourses at political meetings.⁵³ Seeking to avoid the trap of replacing a sociological determinism with a linguistic one, subsequent research has paid close attention to the construction and reception of political languages. Emphasising the relative autonomy of politics from society, which ‘assumes that language plays a crucial role in the translation of material forces; however, it is not a substitute for them’, the work of Jon Lawrence, Matthew Roberts and Paul Readman has alerted historians to the way in which political movements utilise language to construct popular constituencies of support.⁵⁴ Politics is conceptualised as an interactive process; language must appeal to ‘pre-existing identities’ in order ‘to create partisanship’.⁵⁵ This focus on reception is linked to wider issues in cultural history itself where a sometimes-singular focus on mapping out the ‘discursive space of texts’ has often precedence over the evaluation of specific languages through reference to their reception, mediation and contestation by historical actors.⁵⁶

The methodologies associated with the ‘New Political History’, as important work by, Susan Pedersen, David Craig and Steven Fielding illustrates, also bear a notable intellectual debt to an earlier generation of historians working out of Peterhouse College in Cambridge.⁵⁷

⁵³ For an example of this criticism see Roberts, *Political Movements*, 8-9; Vernon, *Politics*, 228-229.

⁵⁴ Lawrence, *Speaking*, 67-68; Roberts, *Political Movements*, 8; P. Readman, *Land and Nation in England: Patriotism, National Identity and the Politics of Land, 1880-1914* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 6-7

⁵⁵ J. Lawrence, ‘The dynamics of urban politics, 1867-1914’, in Taylor & Lawrence (eds.), *Party, State and Society* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 90.

⁵⁶ P. Mandler, ‘The Problem with Cultural History’, *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), 96.

⁵⁷ S. Pedersen, ‘What is Political History Now?’, in D. Cannadine (ed.), *What is History Now* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 40-45; D. Craig, ‘High Politics and the ‘New Political History’, *Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), 453-475; ‘Political Ideas and Languages’, in D. Brown, R. Crowcroft & G. Pentland (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern British Political History 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 20-21; S. Fielding, ‘High Politics’, in D. Brown, R. Crowcroft & G. Pentland (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern British Political History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 37-45.

Maurice Cowling, often stereotyped as the archetypal high-political historian solely interested in charting the motivations and practices of elites, exhibited considerable interest in rhetoric and specifically how politicians used it to justify particular lines of action and validate claims to 'speak for the people'.⁵⁸ Indeed, as Craig points out, Cowling was very much alive to the proposition, perhaps most famously associated with the work of the early-modern intellectual historian Quentin Skinner, that politicians used language, whether they believed it or not, to achieve goals and disguise ends.⁵⁹ This belief in the performative, instrumental and often concealed role of language use is also espoused by Craig and James Thompson in the introduction to their 2013 edited collection *Languages of Politics*. Politicians utilised language as 'a tool for getting things done: justifying lines of action and criticising forms of behaviour' but needn't have believed a word of what they said.⁶⁰ What really mattered was the recognition of constraining 'norms and values' that placed a limit on what politicians could achieve with language.⁶¹

This study shares many of the same aims and preoccupations of the 'New Political History'. It argues that language must construct a viable and plausible representation of political and social 'reality' to be successful, chiming with the pre-occupations and experience of voters, ordinary people, activists and political movements. As Stedman Jones notes, language must be able to confront the 'day to day problems of political and social experience...and resist the attempts of opposing movements to encroach upon, reinterpret or replace it'.⁶² Questions of reception will also be considered. The weakness of certain anti-

⁵⁸ Cowling, *The Impact*, 4-7, 5.

⁵⁹ Craig, 'High Politics', 475.

⁶⁰ D. Craig & J. Thompson, 'Introduction', in D. Craig & J. Thompson (eds.), *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2.

⁶¹ Craig, Thompson, 'Introduction', 2.

⁶² Jones, 'Rethinking', 96.

socialist arguments, for example, can be attributed to their inability to articulate a credible diagnosis of the threats posed by socialists. This linguistic deficiency consequently could not rally prospective supporters to the cause of anti-socialism and was exposed as improbable in the cut and thrust of debate. As well as language, the thesis also explores the practices/activism of anti-socialism. The second chapter, for example, examines a distinctive anti-socialist campaign, which sought to suppress the influence and activities of socialist and proletarian Sunday schools in Britain. The third chapter investigates the associational culture of interwar Rotary clubs, demonstrating how the sociability of the movement helped to sustain and reproduce the wider class hierarches of British society.

Chapter Breakdown

The thesis is divided into four chapters, each of which focuses on a distinctive site of anti-socialist political culture in Britain between 1900 and 1940. The first chapter examines how anti-socialists utilised a historical framework to argue that no positive case for socialism had ever been made. This argument was central to anti-socialist political culture in the Edwardian period, but declined in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution as opponents of socialism could now point to the failures of an actually existing society organised on collectivist lines. Prior to this point, anti-socialists endeavoured to undermine claims that the record of historical progress revealed the inevitability of socialism. They largely employed historical parallels and analogies, particular favourites included the fall of Ancient Greece and Rome and the excesses of the French Revolution, to assert that the principles of socialism were universal and not merely the product of modern industrial conditions. This use of history existed alongside more rigorously contextualised interpretations which held that socialism was a

fundamentally modern creation; the product of developments that had arisen in the late-eighteenth century. Individualist critiques argued that socialism was a retrogressive ideology symptomatic of ancient slave-holding societies. This chapter utilises a case study of the Edwardian 'Right to Work' debate to highlight how these arguments were applied to a specific principle, the right to work, and a specific policy, namely the Labour Party's proposed Unemployed Workmen Act of 1907, that contemporaries recognised as being socialist. Liberals, Conservatives, Individualists, and Municipal Reformers commonly compared the Labour Party's 'Right to Work' bill with the failure of the National Workshops in Paris during the 1848 revolution. Ultimately, the chapter argues that this focus on history was a weakness of anti-socialist argument, owing, in no small part, to the efforts of socialists to contest such claims. Building on the key insights of Laura Beers, Jon Lawrence and James Thompson, who have examined how the labour movement combatted the jibes and insults of early twentieth century anti-socialist propaganda, the chapter details how socialists challenged the claims of their opponents, exposing many of them as ahistorical, de-contextualised and possessing little grasp of evolutionary developments.⁶³

The second chapter investigates a distinctive anti-socialist campaign centred on exposing the malevolent presence of socialist and proletarian Sunday schools in Britain between 1907 and 1927. The belief that the young were particularly susceptible to the influence of socialist teaching was a strikingly common one held by those on the political right in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Children were deemed especially vulnerable to socialist proselyting because of their lack of life experience and perceived receptiveness to

⁶³ Beers, 'Counter-Toryism', 231-254; "'Is This Man an Anarchist?'" Industrial Action and the Battle for Public Opinion in Interwar Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, 82 (2010), 30-60; Lawrence, 'Labour and the Politics of Class', 241; J. Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of 'Public Opinion', 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 232-240.

radical and idealistic doctrines. The Socialist Sunday Schools, and their later proletarian appendages, represented the practical embodiment of these fears. Critics of the schools believed that they were imparting atheistic and unpatriotic doctrines to young and impressionable minds. Their existence was seized upon by right-wing newspapers, groups such as the British Empire Union and National Citizens' Union, and dedicated organisations formed specifically to combat the socialist youth movement. Beginning in 1907, with the publication of a series of expose-type articles by *The Daily Telegraph* deliberately coinciding with the London County Council elections, the campaign reached its apotheosis in the 1920s as it sought to drum up political support for a 'Seditious and Blasphemous Teachings Bill'. This proposed piece of legislation sought to ban socialist and communist teachings in schools if it could be demonstrably proven that atheistic and un-constitutional doctrines were being taught.

This campaign demonstrates the importance of localism to early-twentieth century anti-socialism. Inaugurated in London, the campaign was the creation of right-wing groups whose strength was derived from the south-eastern regions of England. Church approval was also prominently sought for the campaign. Groups such as the Anti-Socialist Union and the British Empire extensively lobbied organisations and leaders within the Church of England. The church largely rejected these overtures, a development that hampered the effectiveness of the campaign. The Anglican women's organisation, the Mothers' Union, constituted the one notable exception to this general trend. The role of the Mothers' Union within the campaign brings into view wider questions about the non-party stance of middle-class associational culture. The literature of the Mothers' Union often expressed an overt hostility towards socialism, and was based on core ideological differences rather than a manifestation

of an apolitical form of sociability as argued by Ross McKibbin.⁶⁴ The chapter argues that the Mothers' Union was a key supporter of the Conservative Party within civil society. The campaign also illustrates the theme of continuity in anti-socialist political culture. Its ideology and activists remained remarkably stable over the twenty-year period between 1907 and 1927.

The third chapter investigates the existence of an ostensibly more progressive vision of anti-socialism in the form of the Rotary movement. In marked contrast to the Mothers' Union, Rotary rejected the appeals of radical right-wing groups, was lukewarm about the activity of strikebreaking and could even express admiration for socialist thinkers. The Rotary vision remained hierarchal and paternalistic, instigating initiatives that sought to educate newly enfranchised working-class voters in the duties of citizenship and held true to the perception that the middle classes were the true drivers of social reform. The chapter, again, disputes McKibbin's paradigm of 'apolitical sociability'. Rotary members often presented their social and charitable work as a bulwark guarding against the further spread of socialist and communist doctrines. The chapter mounts, perhaps, a greater challenge to Helen McCarthy's work which argues that Rotary, along with other non-party organisations such as Women's Institutes, the British Legion and the League of Nations Union, helped to break down social barriers and legitimise democratic values in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶⁵ Rejecting the argument that Rotary expressed a narrow anti-labour outlook, McCarthy overstates the progressivism of the movement and tends to underplay the anti-socialist ends that underpinned its support for policies such as profit-sharing and industrial councils.⁶⁶ In addition, through an

⁶⁴ McKibbin, *Classes*, 96-98.

⁶⁵ McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations', *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c.1918-1945* (London, 2013).

⁶⁶ McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations', 903-904.

examination of the membership records for the Bristol, Nottingham, Sheffield and Leicester clubs, the chapter argues that Rotary remained the domain of middle-class property owners. Efforts to recruit more working-class members were hampered by the relative apathy of members. The popularity of expensive social activities like golf also helped to sustain the exclusivity of the movement. A desire to maintain middle class homogeneity appears to have taken precedence over efforts to expand participation.

The final chapter examines a literary anti-socialist culture present in popular fiction between 1900 and 1940. Best-selling writers created and utilised two prominent anti-socialist character archetypes. The first, the figure of the champagne socialist, was generally depicted as a utopian dreamer out of touch with the realities and everyday experiences faced by working people. The second archetype, the socialist agitator, was portrayed as a malevolent force. Motivated by the base instincts of greed, envy, and malice, he needlessly led honest trade unionists into battles with their bosses and social superiors. The chapter examines the works of quintessentially middlebrow authors such as Agatha Christie, Somerset Maugham, John Buchan and P.G. Wodehouse and other forms of popular fiction to challenge existing assumptions about literary anti-socialism.⁶⁷ It argues that popular literature tended not to condemn working-class trade unionists but rather focused on foreign agitators and their sympathisers in the labour movement. Ridicule was reserved for the champagne socialist trope whose political views were ruthlessly mocked by popular writers between 1900 and 1940.

⁶⁷ A. Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991); McKibbin, *Classes*, 483-485.

To conclude, what are the main findings of this project? Firstly, anti-socialism, which has often been equated solely with the political interests of the Conservative Party, was, in fact, a diverse political culture marked by divergence, nuance and conviction. Secondly, the study demonstrates that anti-socialism had various strengths and weaknesses. Blunt attacks on the labour movement were not successful when compared to more subtle versions that promoted social reform and empathised with the plight of the working classes. Carefully constructed anti-socialist strategies promoted values that ultimately aided the survival of the existing social and political order. By contrast, harder versions of anti-socialism often exaggerated the dangers of the socialist menace. This unrealistic analysis failed to rally popular support and was easily discredited by socialists.

Chapter One: The Anti-Socialist Use of History, 1900-1914

In March 1907, Philip Snowden, the leading economic theorist within the pre-war Labour Party, published a book entitled *The Socialist's Budget*. The central aim of the pamphlet was to outline how taxation could be used to 'advance socialist aims'.⁶⁸ Snowden proposed that local and national taxation should aim at securing the unearned increment of wealth for the benefit of the community. This was to be achieved through a policy that directly targeted the retention of large incomes in private hands, 'recognising that the few cannot be rich without making the poor pay'.⁶⁹ The policies advocated in *The Socialist's Budget* endured a particularly frosty reception in the pages of the *Daily Mail*. In an editorial entitled 'Highway Robbery up to Date', the *Mail* accused Snowden of seeking to plunder 'the idle and luxurious rich by whom socialists mean everyone who has a penny to bless himself with'.⁷⁰ Snowden's plans to impose punitive rates of taxation on high-earners had already been tried in the time of the French Revolution and had resulted in 'equality in misery, equality in starvation, and equality in universal ruin'.⁷¹

Similar sentiments would be espoused a year later by Sir Robert Filmer Bart, a member of the pro-Conservative London Municipal Society, in a debate with the Social Democratic Federation activist E.J. Pay. Citing the failure of the national workshops in France in 1848, Bart declared that 'socialism historically considered...has always been a farce' and sounded a rallying call to other anti-socialists by stating that 'we scatter the socialist dreams of the future by reference to the past'.⁷² Liberals also employed historical analogies to discredit the claims

⁶⁸ P. Snowden, *The Socialist's Budget* (London: George Allen, 1907), 3.

⁶⁹ Snowden, *The Socialist's*, 8.

⁷⁰ 'Highway Robbery up to Date', *Daily Mail* (London), 26. March. 1907

⁷¹ 'Highway Robbery up to Date'.

⁷² Anti-Socialist Union, *Debate between E.J. Pay and Sir Robert Filmer Bart* (London: Anti-Socialist Union Publication Department, 1908), 9.

of socialists. In 1909, Thomas Whitaker stated that socialism, referring specifically to the examples of Robert Owen, Henri De Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier 'is but a revival, a continuation and a refurbishing of old fallacies, which have been refuted and exploded again and again in the past'.⁷³ The lessons of the past completely invalidated socialist ideology in the eyes of the prominent liberal trade union leader Henry Vivian. Vivian attacked the proposals of the Labour Party's 1907 Unemployed Workmen's Act as having no sound basis in historical precedent. 'Could they give a single example drawn from the experience.... of schemes that approximated in any degree to the proposals contained in this bill'.⁷⁴

The above examples are indicative of the centrality of a historical perspective to the political culture of Edwardian anti-socialism. Anti-Socialists invoked the authority of the past in three distinctive ways. The first, and by far the most prevalent, utilised historical parallels and analogies to claim that contemporary socialist principles had been invalidated by the lessons of history. Common examples cited in support of this argument included the decline and fall of Greece and Rome in antiquity, the failure of primitive communist communities, and the egalitarian excesses of the French Revolution. The second perspective paid more attention to matters of context and historical circumstance, charting the emergence of modern socialism from the late-eighteenth century onwards and tracing its flaws and fallacies to movements that self-consciously espoused collectivism. The third interpretation, influenced by individualist theories of history, placed socialism within the framework of an evolutionary

⁷³ T.P. Whitaker, *Socialism or Social Reform? A Test of Experience* (London: Anti-Socialist Union Publication Department, 1909), 5.

⁷⁴ HC Deb 13 Mar 1908, vol 186, cc42-43.

<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1908/mar/13/unemployed-workmen-bill> [accessed 16 February 2016].

model of social change, deeming it to be retrogressive and redolent of superseded tendencies associated with primitive forms of society.

These specific elements of anti-socialist argument have received insufficient attention in the existing scholarship, constitutive of a substantial omission when one considers the significance of historical development for socialists. The progress of history, whether determined by the evolutionary growth of the social organism or the dialectical clash of mutually opposing relations of production, explicitly pointed to the future displacement of capitalism and the inevitability of socialism. These theoretical formulations imparted to socialist politicians and activists operating on the ground a sense that 'history was on their side' and confirmed the righteousness of their cause. It was imperative, then, for anti-socialists to meet and undercut these confident declarations relating to the inexorable march of history towards the socialist future. Opponents of socialism, by contrast, posited a rival interpretation of the past that delineated the follies of public ownership, progressive taxation and revolutionary upheaval.

Anti-Socialists were operating in a wider Edwardian context that some scholars have deemed to be manifestly modern and forward-facing, the insights of history being seen as increasingly antiquarian. One influential interpretation emphasises the 'anachronism' of the past in an age which witnessed the establishment of history as a distinctive academic profession, the rise of ostensibly modern ideologies such as New Liberalism and National Efficiency, the predominance of 'catastrophist' interpretations that stressed the importance of the Industrial Revolution in creating a new society, and rapid modifications to the constitution.⁷⁵ This development marked a stark contrast to the situation in the first half of

⁷⁵ P.B.M. Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism: Parliamentary and Constitutional Development in Whig*

the nineteenth century where the use of a historical perspective was central to a number of important political traditions. The restorationist arguments of popular radicalism, the Whig celebration of the English constitutionalist tradition, the invocations of a lost medieval past in the language of radical Toryism, and the persistent appeal to historical precedent in parliamentary debates were all noticeable examples of how history could be used to underpin or justify a particular political position.⁷⁶ Studies incorporating political, social and cultural perspectives have also stated the case for the decreasing relevance of the past from the late-nineteenth century onwards. In her influential 1993 book *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, Jose Harris argued for the unique dominance of the present time in the immediate decades following 1870.⁷⁷ Peter Mandler has contended that English culture became gradually less interested in history in the late nineteenth century as a result of trends, such as the increasing popularity of photography and the growth of tourism and travel, which tended towards

Historiography and in the Anti-Whig Reaction Between 1890 and 1930 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), xiv; P. Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 112-116; A.D. Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 281; R.J. Smith, *The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought, 1688-1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 197.

⁷⁶ For restorative radicalism see P. Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption': The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 96-104; J. Innes, "'Reform' in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word", in A. Burns, J. Innes, (eds.), *Rethinking the Age of Reform, Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90-91; R. McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 1998), 59-60; For Whig history see J. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); H.S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought* (London: Palgrave, 2000), 152-155; For the importance of history to Radical Toryism see M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 66-70; For history's general significance to politics see J. Burrow, 'All That Glitters: Political Science and the Lessons of History', in S. Collini, D. Winch, and J. Burrow (eds.), *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 185-205; O. Anderson, 'The Political Uses of History in Mid Nineteenth Century England', *Past and Present*, 36 (1967), 87-105; A. Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: Habits of Heart & Men* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 53-59.

⁷⁷ J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33.

modernisation.⁷⁸ Literary historians like Raymond Chapman have asserted that history was quickly becoming irrelevant to the needs of a rapidly expanding urban democracy.⁷⁹

These arguments co-exist uneasily with readings that emphasise the importance of the historical method to prevailing trends in political economy during the late-Victorian period and identify the decades between 1870 and 1914 as the zenith of invented national and political traditions, spanning the geographic expanse of Europe and relying on 'anachronistic allure' and visions of a 'mythological past'.⁸⁰ Strongly contesting Peter Mandler's claim that English culture was 'questioning the relevance of the national past' in the late nineteenth century, Paul Readman contends that a popular historic consciousness, which transcended the divisive fractures of class, provided the motive force for an imagined continuity of English nationhood.⁸¹ Sharing Readman's cultural focus, Billie Melman has explored the popular consumption of history in nineteenth and twentieth century Britain through an investigation of tourist attractions, museums, best-selling books and films.⁸² Emily Jones's recent book examining the reception history of Edmund Burke has illustrated the potency of the Anglo-Irishman's memory to late-Victorian and Edwardian Conservative debates relating to the constitution, Irish home rule and the challenges posed by new liberals and socialists.⁸³

Jones's work is generally an outlier when it comes to discussions about the role of history in scholarly accounts of the Edwardian Conservative Party. Scholars have largely been

⁷⁸P. Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 109-117.

⁷⁹R. Chapman, *The Sense of the Past in Victorian Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 187.

⁸⁰D. Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c.1820-1877', in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 138; E. Hobsbawm, 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1871-1914', in Hobsbawm & Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, 287.

⁸¹P. Readman, 'The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890-1914', *Past & Present*, 186 (2005), 197-198.

⁸²B. Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past 1800-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29-66, 123-156, 185-214, 247-281.

⁸³E. Jones, *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 156-194.

pre-occupied with examining the processes by which politicians and intellectuals, particularly those with affiliations to the Radical Right and National Efficiency movements, attempted to modernise the ideology and political practice of Conservatism in response to changing economic and political contexts.⁸⁴ These contexts included the expansion of democracy, the fall-out of the Boer War, imperial competition, economic depression, the resurgence of the Liberal Party after 1906, the discovery of 'the social problem', and the related rise of socialism. This diverse group of Conservative modernisers, notable figures included Joseph Chamberlain, F.E. Smith, Alfred Milner, Willoughby De Brooke, believed that traditional approaches, which sought to stop all ill-considered political changes and venerated national institutions such as the monarchy and the Church of England, were insufficient to preserve the party's appeal in an age of rapid social change.⁸⁵ They advocated that Conservatives should develop constructive political strategies aimed at addressing the distinctively modern concerns of a polity that had little respect for historical precedent. These reformers embraced an explicit appeal to the interests of the working classes and promoted an expanded role for the state through the application of social, protectionist and preferential tariffs.⁸⁶ Tariff reform was symbolic of 'a break with the traditions going back into the nineteenth century and raised the

⁸⁴ For the Radical Right or Radical Conservatives see E.H.H Green, 'Radical Conservatism: The Electoral Genesis of Tariff Reform', *The Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 667-692; *The Crisis of Conservatism* (London: Routledge, 1995); A. Sykes, *The Radical Right in Britain: Social Imperialism to the BNP* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 'The Radical Right and the Crisis of Conservatism Before the First World War', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), 661-676; For a perspective on the popular pressure groups of Radical Conservatism see F. Coetzee, *For Party or Country: Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Popular Conservatism in Edwardian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); D. Thackeray, 'The Crisis of the Tariff Reform League and the Division of Radical Conservatism', c.1913-1922', *History*, 91 (2006), 45-61; For National Efficiency see G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency, 1899-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); B. Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960).

⁸⁵ G.R. Searle, 'Critics of Edwardian Society: The Case of the Radical Right', in A. O' Day (ed.), *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability, 1900-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 82.

⁸⁶ F. Coetzee, 'Faction and Failure: 1905-1910', in S. Ball & A. Seldon., (eds.), *Recovering Power: The Conservative Party in Opposition since 1867* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 107.

possibility of redefining unionism in a way that made sense in terms of the demands of the twentieth century'.⁸⁷

The issue of anti-socialism within the party has been subsumed within these wider modernisation narratives. Writing in 1973, at a time when accounts relating to the 'rise of class politics' were dominant, K.D. Brown asserted that the arrival of the Labour Party on the political scene in 1906 symbolised the beginning of a new form of politics based on the social cleavage of class. Conservative anti-socialism was, therefore, determined by the realisation 'that the future conflict in British politics would be between individualism as represented by the Conservative Party and collectivism as represented by the burgeoning Labour movement'.⁸⁸ In reference to the Conservative pressure groups of the Edwardian era, Frans Coetzee has stated that 'unionist appeals to a tradition of tory democracy would prove of little significance' against a doctrine that stressed 'the primacy of international loyalties and seemed calculated to mobilise workers as a class'.⁸⁹ Scholars interested in the interplay between ideology and political practice such as E.H.H Green, Matthew Fforde, and Alan Sykes have characterised tariff reform as an explicitly anti-socialist policy geared towards undercutting the appeal of the Labour Party to working class voters.⁹⁰ Jon Lawrence has asserted that the anti-socialist discourses of groups like the Primrose League and the Anti-Socialist Union were important components of an emerging Conservative language that

⁸⁷ D. Dutton, *His Majesty's Loyal Opposition: The Unionist Party in Opposition, 1905-1915* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), 258-259.

⁸⁸ K.D. Brown, 'The Anti-Socialist Union, 1908-1949', in K. D. Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1974), 236.

⁸⁹ F. Coetzee, *For Party or Country: Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Popular Conservatism in Edwardian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 98.

⁹⁰ Green, 'Radical Conservatism', 686; *The Crisis of Conservatism*, 250-251; A. Sykes, *Tariff Reform in British Politics, 1903-1913* (Oxford, 1979), 118-119; M. Fforde, *Conservatism and Collectivism, 1886-1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 90.

rejected the masculine, alcohol-infused tropes of the Victorian period in favour of a perspective rooted in femininity and domestic life.⁹¹

The study of late nineteenth and early twentieth century individualist ideology has registered the significance of history to anti-socialism. Scholars have skilfully outlined how the individualist theory of history, most prominently advocated by Herbert Spencer, depicted socialism as a reversion to a more primitive form of social organisation.⁹² Modern socialist principles like nationalisation were deemed to be representative of customs belonging to earlier forms of society. Studies dealing with pressure groups influenced by individualist ideology, such as the Liberty and Property Defence League, have also recognised the centrality of a historical perspective. The Liberty and Property Defence League, in the words of Nicholas Soldon, 'liked to regard socialists as reactionaries on the grounds that their demands for state intervention meant a return to the days of Queen Elizabeth'.⁹³ Individualism was most certainly a minority creed, perceived to be extremist by contemporaries in a context where nearly all forms of political and intellectual thought were coming round to the idea that some degree of state intervention, of which all forms more than the current level were seen as 'socialist' by the individualists, was necessary to the workings of a modern economy. In Michael Taylor's words, 'the individualists remained too deeply rooted in the assumptions and

⁹¹ J. Lawrence, 'Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914', *English Historical Review*, 108 (1993), 646-648.

⁹² S. Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology: L.T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England, 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 13-51; M.W. Taylor, *Men Versus the State, Herbert Spencer and Late Victorian Individualism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 167-196; W.H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition: Vol. II, The Ideological Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1983), 59-62.

⁹³ N. Soldon, 'Laissez Faire as Dogma: The Liberty and Property Defence League, 1882-1914', in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, 232; For other studies looking at the league see E.J. Bristow, 'The Liberty and Property Defence League and Individualism', *Historical Journal* 18 (1975), 761-789; *Individualism Versus Socialism in Britain, 1880-1914* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987).

preconceptions of the mid-Victorian era to confront the political issues of greatest moment in the new century'.⁹⁴

This chapter makes four key claims. Firstly, it demonstrates the importance of a historical perspective to anti-socialist thought and political practice in the Edwardian period. This strain of thought would not be a major feature of anti-socialist activism after the First World War as its exponents could now easily allude to the dangers of socialism through reference to Bolshevik Russia. The Russian experiment provided a real living example of what happened when socialists seized power and began applying their revolutionary theories. Secondly, the chapter illustrates the ubiquity with which Conservatives employed historical examples to discredit the claims of socialists. Historians and political theorists have always been keenly aware of the importance of history to Conservatives as a bulwark against the *a priori* reasoning of theories like liberalism and socialism. However, these studies have given relatively generalised accounts of the relationship between conservatism and history, paying little attention to the actual historical examples and experiences that Conservatives drew intellectual and political inspiration from.⁹⁵ Philip Williamson's critique of how Conservative ideas have often been abstracted from actual historical conditions, 'unrelated to specific political cultures and arguments', is particularly relevant to this point.⁹⁶ The chapter will,

⁹⁴ Taylor, *Men Versus the State*, 274.

⁹⁵ See F. Gorman, *British Conservatism: Conservative Thought from Burke to Thatcher* (London: Longman, 1986), 3; S. Ball, *Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain, 1918-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21-22; 'The Principles of British Conservatism from Balfour to Heath, c. 1910-1975', in B.W. Hart & R. Carr (eds.), *The Foundations of the British Conservative Party: Essays on Conservatism from Lord Salisbury to David Cameron* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 28-39; E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 283-286. The importance of specific historical memories to Conservative political culture has been touched upon in recent studies. See M. Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World: Conservative Environments in Late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 295-322; E. Jones, 'Conservatism, Edmund Burke, and the Invention of a Political Tradition, c.1885-1914', *Historical Journal*, 58 (2015), 1115-1139.

⁹⁶ P. Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 17.

therefore, highlight how Edwardian Conservatives used historical examples like the French Revolution, the failure of Christian Communism, and the fall of Rome to attack ideas or movements they perceived as socialist. Thirdly, the chapter sheds light on early-twentieth Liberal anti-socialism, an ideological tendency that is rarely explored in depth in recent scholarly accounts. This often-neglected aspect of anti-socialist political culture will be illustrated in the chapter's second section which focuses on the Edwardian 'Right to Work' debate. The right to work, a concept which possessed a distinguished lineage in socialist thought, provided the guiding principle for much of the early activism of the Labour Party, especially in relation to its unemployment policy. The party's proposed 1907 Unemployed Workmen Act was attacked vociferously by anti-socialists for repeating the mistakes of an earlier socialist experiment, namely the National Workshops that sprung up in Paris in the wake of the 1848 revolution. Most Liberals opposed the bill on account of its socialist character, a development that is illustrative of the very real ideological and internal differences that existed within the Progressive alliance. Conversely, the chapter also shows how socialists drew upon pre-existing radical liberal languages to combat right-wing claims that socialism was a creed of expropriation. Conservatives also used anti-socialist rhetoric to attack Liberals, especially during the tumultuous period of the People's Budget when politicians like Lloyd George were condemned as being the modern incarnations of Robespierre and Jacobinism. The chapter argues that the historical arguments of anti-socialism, whilst widespread and prominent, were ultimately a weakness, exposed by their political opponents as inaccurate, randomly chosen, ignorant of evolutionary theory and possessing little relevance to contemporary political conditions. This contention is examined in the third section of the chapter which examines the socialist response to these historical attacks and outlines their

consequent efforts to go on the offensive through rhetorical condemnations of landed conservatives and their antecedents in the seventeenth century.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first chapter examines the anti-socialist invocation of the historical examples of Ancient Greece and Rome, the French Revolution, and utopian religious and secular communities. The second section investigates the 'Edwardian Right to Work' debate and the anti-socialist response, which prominently relied on the historical analogy of the National Workshops. The final section deals with the socialist response to these historical attacks.

I

The electoral breakthrough of the Labour Party in 1906 was deemed by many Conservatives to be indicative of the creeping spread of socialism in British political life. Arthur Balfour, in a much-quoted phrase, remarked that Labour's success had echoes of the 'same phenomenon which has led to demonstrations in Berlin and St Petersburg'.⁹⁷ Outlining the reasons for the Conservative Party's failure in the election, George Wyndham asserted that the political future was now between the competing forces of socialism and imperialism; 'if socialism wins we shall cease to be.... we shall perish with Babylon, Rome, and Constantinople'.⁹⁸ W. Lawler Wilson believed that everything in politics had changed since the landslide of 1906. 'Where are the war-cries, the great issues, the passions of 1900?' Now our talk is all of Labour Representation, Old Age Pensions, Unemployment Remedies and Socialism'.⁹⁹ Writing in 1908, Ronald MacNeill declared 'that the general election of 1906 appears to have been to many

⁹⁷ Quoted in Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*, 124.

⁹⁸ Quoted in S. Ball, *The Conservative Party and British Politics, 1902-1951* (New York: Longman, 2013), 130.

⁹⁹ W. Lawler Wilson, *The Menace of Socialism* (London: Grant Richards, 1909), 13.

people the first intimation that socialism in this country was anything more than a species of original sin'.¹⁰⁰

The sentiment that socialism was becoming a realisable threat was certainly common to all sections of Conservative opinion. These fears could be somewhat alleviated when the record of history was surveyed. Conservatives deduced from the evidence of history that socialism had existed for a very long time. In the words of Claude Lowther, socialism 'was not a mere modern growth as many people imagined it to be, but from the earliest ages had had loud mouthed agitators preaching the doctrines of public plunder and individual slavery'.¹⁰¹ The tariff reformer Alfred Hicks decried the fact that 'people often spoke of socialism as though it was quite a new thing, and as if it had never had a trial'.¹⁰² These pronouncements ran directly counter to the theories of socialists like Sidney Webb and Ramsay MacDonald who conceived of socialism as a fundamentally modern creation; a product of the conditions created by the rise of the factory system in the Industrial Revolution and the spread of democratic ideals in the French Revolution.¹⁰³ It bore little resemblance to the multitude of utopian socialisms that had existed before the dawn of evolutionary theory. This is a point that will be explored further in the final section of the chapter.

The attempt to identify a far longer lineage of socialism pre-dating the events of the French and Industrial Revolution was not merely a challenge to temporal chronologies; it could also be utilised to contribute to a larger argument demonstrating how socialist principles had been practically applied throughout the course of history and had always

¹⁰⁰ R. MacNeill, 'Socialism', in Lord Malmesbury (ed.), *The New Order: Studies in Unionist Policy* (London: Francis Griffiths, 1908), 315.

¹⁰¹ 'Socialism Attacked', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 23 Aug. 1907.

¹⁰² 'Tariff Reform versus Socialism', *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 10 Nov. 1905.

¹⁰³ Sidney Webb, 'Historic Basis of Socialism', in G.B. Shaw (ed.), *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (London: The Fabian Society, 1889), 37-41; J.R. MacDonald, *Socialism* (London: T.C & E.C Jack, 1907), 17-19.

resulted in complete and abject failure. Prominent historical examples invoked in support of this argument included the demise of Athens and the fall of Rome in classical antiquity. The example of Athens was employed by Conservatives interested in illuminating the historical consequences of redistributive taxation. An anonymous 1907 article in the *Daily Mail* entitled 'Socialism in History' declared that the increase of tax obligations on high earners led to the ultimate decline of the Athenian city state in the fifth century BC.¹⁰⁴ The focus on this specific time period reflected the lingering influence of Victorian modes of thought which compared the modern political experience of Britain with the ideals and practices of Periclean Athens, an equation felt to be especially relevant to discussions of constitutional reform and democratic governance.¹⁰⁵ Conservative historians such as G.D. Grundy railed against the 'communistic' follies of Athenian democracy; its resolve and sense of social unity ruptured by outbreaks of class conflict between rich and poor citizens, the latter using their newly-won political power to expropriate the wealth of the former.¹⁰⁶ The *Daily Mail* article similarly connected the dangers of socialism and democracy, detailing how high rates of taxation levied on the 'well-to-do' funded expensive public projects such as 'navy ships' or a 'play in the state theatre'.¹⁰⁷ These taxes, enacted for the benefit of the lower classes at the behest of corrupt politicians, became increasingly onerous as the polis 'became more and more democratic'. The ensuing impoverishment of the principal taxpayers and the consequent drop in public revenue eventually resulted in the collapse of Athens as a viable city state.

This historical illustration was closely linked to a prominent Conservative conception of socialism. A political action could be deemed socialist if it sought to use the power of the

¹⁰⁴ 'Socialism in History', *Daily Mail* (London), 2 Nov. 1907.

¹⁰⁵ Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 204-264.

¹⁰⁶ Turner, *The Greek*, 248-250.

¹⁰⁷ 'Socialism in History'.

state to promote the interests of the property-less at the expense of the propertied.¹⁰⁸ This task had been made easier by the extension of democratic norms as socialists could blatantly appeal to the naked self-interests of the working classes through the use of measures that attacked property rights. While the decline of Athens was attributed to the socialist principle of making the rich pay more, the fall of Rome was characterised by the socialist demand to make the poor pay less. The *Mail* article, for example, examined the travails of the populist Roman agitator Gracchus. In the year 130 BC, reacting against the displacement of free labour by slaves, Gracchus had forced the Roman authorities to pass a law that entitled every 'free-born' citizen to 'receive from the state a certain quantity of corn at half the market price'.¹⁰⁹ John St. Loe Strachey, the influential Liberal Unionist and editor of the *Spectator*, outlined the disastrous effects of these so-called 'corn-doles' in his 1908 work *The Problems & Perils of Socialism*.¹¹⁰ Referencing the work of Thomas Hodgkin, a relatively obscure Quaker historian who wrote an eight volume work entitled *Italy and her Invaders* in the 1880s, Strachey remarked that the state's provision of corn and other related means of subsistence destroyed the spirit of self-reliance amongst 'poorer Romans'.¹¹¹ This misguided philanthropy, existing concomitantly alongside a punishing system of rates and taxes imposed upon the middle classes, created a demoralised and pauperised population that was powerless to stop the invasion of Rome by Germanic tribes. Strachey concluded by sounding a warning to contemporaries about the perils of state socialism:

¹⁰⁸ Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism*, 113.

¹⁰⁹ 'Socialism in History'.

¹¹⁰ J. St. L., Strachey, *The Problems & Perils of Socialism: Letters to a Working Man* (London: Macmillan, 1908), 116-120.

¹¹¹ Strachey, *The Problems*, 117.

If we are to avoid the fate that overtook Imperial Rome...we must not destroy but build up the strength of the nation; and the strength of the nation is the strength of the individuals who compose it.¹¹²

In this passage, Strachey highlighted the socio-political pitfalls that led to the decline of Rome. This argument was similar to prevailing invocations of Roman decline which were commonly related to Britain governance's of an empire spanning the globe; historical commentators such as James Bryce, Charles Lucas and the Earl of Cromer contended that Rome's fall could be attributed to internal causes.¹¹³ The maladies of corruption, overpopulation and over taxation of the cultivating classes had sapped the spirit of the Roman people, providing invaluable lessons for officials tasked with the maintenance and continuing survival of the British Empire.¹¹⁴ Contrarily, radical critics of empire like J.A. Hobson argued Rome's end was generated by the enervating effects of imperial expansion.¹¹⁵ The historian and leading proponent of empire, John Seeley, felt that the failings of the Roman military character' were at variance with the commercial, productive, vigorous and creative abilities of 'Greater Britain'.¹¹⁶

The invocation of the examples of Greece and Rome by Edwardian Conservatives and Liberal Unionists is symptomatic of contemporaneous concerns about the progressive taxation proposals of new liberals and socialists. Both partners in the 'Progressive Alliance' believed in a graduated income tax, advocated for duty increases on land ownership and property inheritance, and contended that taxation, taken as a whole, should differentiate between

¹¹² Strachey, *The Problems*, 119.

¹¹³ K. Kumar, 'Greece and Rome in the British Empire: Contrasting Role Models', *Journal of British Studies* 51 (2012), 99; For other uses of the Roman analogy in British imperialist and political thought see R. Betts, 'The allusion to Rome in British Imperialist thought of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', *Victorian Studies*, 15 (1971), 149-59; F. Turner, 'British Politics and the demise of the Roman republic: 1700-1939', *Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), 577-599; N. Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

¹¹⁴ Kumar, 'Greece and Rome', 99.

¹¹⁵ Kumar, 'Greece and Rome', 95-96.

¹¹⁶ D. Bell, 'From Ancient to Modern in Victorian Imperial Thought', *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 749-750.

earned and unearned incomes, rent derived from monopoly of a resource or asset being an especially egregious example of the latter.¹¹⁷ It is important to note that considerable tensions existed within this alliance of liberals and socialists about the end goal of such a radically innovative fiscal policy; new liberal theorists such as J.A. Hobson and L.T. Hobhouse were 'moral reformists' and looked to liberate character and individualism in order to change not overthrow capitalism.¹¹⁸ Socialists, at least on a strict programmatic level, aimed to replace private property and capitalist accumulation with a system of common ownership that orientated production around social need as opposed to profit. Both new liberals and socialists could agree, however, that social reforms such as old-age pensions, labour exchanges and unemployment insurance could be funded from schemes of redistributive taxation. The Liberal budgets of 1907 and 1909, which applied graduated and differentiated rates of taxation, were vociferously attacked by Conservatives as being tantamount to a form of class warfare that punished the rich and sought to buy off the poor with financial handouts.¹¹⁹ In an October 1909 letter addressed to the *Times*, for example, the Conservative politician Frederick Milner condemned the 'socialistic' proposals of Lloyd George's 'People's Budget', an attempt to 'stir up class 'hatred' and appealing to the 'greed and cupidity of the masses'.¹²⁰

Conservative writers and politicians also claimed that the principles of modern-day socialism were the same as those that led to the demise of earlier religious communities organised on a communistic basis. Communism was generally defined as referring to a system of communal organisation where all land and property was held in common.¹²¹ The wealth of

¹¹⁷ M. Daunt, *Trusting Leviathan, 1799-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 349-374.

¹¹⁸ Daunt, *Trusting*, 349; the phrase 'moral reformist' comes from P. Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5, 15.

¹¹⁹ Daunt, *Trusting*, 361.

¹²⁰ 'The Chancellor of the Exchequer at Newcastle', *The Times* (London), 19 Oct. 1909.

¹²¹ Wilson, *The Menace*, 43-44; J.E. Barker, *British Socialism: An Examination of its Doctrines, Policy, Aims and Practical Proposals* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1908), 383-384; Anti-Socialist Union, *Socialism Exposed* (London: J.W. Urwin, 1914), 223-224, 366.

the communist community would be shared and distributed equally among all its members. The doctrine of common ownership was characterised by Conservatives as having roots in the writings of Plato.¹²² It had also been present in the early days of the Christian Church where the apostles had established a communist congregation in the form of a community of goods. In the eyes of Conservative writers like James Ellis Barker, the *Daily Mail* correspondent and the prolific author of anti-German tracts such as *Modern Germany*, the community of goods had been a complete disaster because it ignored some fundamental precepts underpinning the constitution of human nature.¹²³ Barker portrayed human nature as naturally acquisitive and prone to the establishment of hierarchies. These blunt realities were directly responsible for the massive disparities of wealth and status in human society. The existence of inequality reflected the varying levels of intelligence and ambition that were dispersed across the whole of humanity. The Christian community of goods, and by extension Communism as a whole, violated these core facts, promising an 'equal reward for all, a doctrine which will only be attractive to the lowest rank of workers, the lazy, and the inefficient.'¹²⁴ Contemporary socialists such as Keir Hardie were merely re-iterating the mistakes of the past by enthusiastically supporting a 'free Communism in which the rule of life will be from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.¹²⁵ The renaissance of the communistic idea in the modern socialist movement ignored 'the record of more than two thousand years of universal failure.'¹²⁶

¹²² F.E. Smith, *Unionist Policy and Other Essays* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1913), 29; The Liberal Unionist historian William Lecky believed that Plato had advocated 'schemes for remodelling society on a communistic basis' in the second volume of his 1896 work *Democracy and Liberty*. See W.E.H. Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty: Vol II* (London: Longmans, 1896), 189-190.

¹²³ Barker, *British*, 386.

¹²⁴ Barker, *British*, 386.

¹²⁵ Barker, *British*, 391.

¹²⁶ Barker, *British*, 392.

Similar parallels were drawn between modern socialism and the Anabaptist movement of the late sixteenth century. A product of the Radical Reformation, the Anabaptists believed in establishing a society based on the community of goods principle.¹²⁷ The group practically applied this belief when it seized charge of the Westphalian town of Munster in 1534. While the group's rule over the town of Munster was short-lived, being driven out by the army of the city's bishop in June 1535, their attempts to put the principle of common ownership into practice elicited much attention from subsequent Marxist theorists.¹²⁸ Friedrich Engels in his once canonical account of the German Peasants War characterised Anabaptist leaders like Thomas Muntzer to be leading examples of early communists.¹²⁹ Karl Kautsky saw the defeat of the Anabaptist Revolt at Munster as symbolising the wider decline of Christian Communism in the sixteenth century. In its place, the development of a nascent capitalism during this period would be the catalyst for the creation of the modern state and the modern proletariat; the era would also bear witness to the 'birth of modern socialism'.¹³⁰ Ernest Belfort Bax, who wrote a 1903 book about the group entitled *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists*, articulated similar sentiments to Kautsky by deeming Anabaptism to be 'the culminating effort of medieval Christian Communism'.¹³¹ Occurring at a time when European society was still defined by the feudal mode of production, Bax refuted the notion that the Anabaptists had advocated modern socialist theories like the nationalisation of the means of production.¹³² Utilising the theories of historical materialism, both Kautsky and Bax discerned Anabaptist communism to be

¹²⁷ J.M. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 123-139.

¹²⁸ E. Van Ree, *Boundaries of Utopia: Imagining Communism from Plato to Stalin* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 24.

¹²⁹ Van Ree, *Boundaries*, 23.

¹³⁰ K. Kautsky, *Communism in Central Europe in the time of the Reformation* (London: T Fisher & Unwin, 1897), 293.

¹³¹ E.B. Bax, *Rise and fall of the Anabaptists* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1903), v.

¹³² Bax, *Rise*, v.

specific to a particular period of economic evolution. While recognised as one of the ‘forerunners of modern socialism’, the communism of the Anabaptist movement had little applicability to the workings of a modern society determined by capitalist methods of production.¹³³

H.O. Arnold-Forster’s 1908 book *English Socialism of Today* directly contested how the events of the Anabaptist revolt had been interpreted by Marxists. Forster declared that the characteristics and principles of socialism were similar to all historical periods, citing the examples of the Anabaptist Revolt, the French Revolution, and the Paris Commune, and could not be characterised as specific by-products of a particular stage of economic development.¹³⁴ Socialism was a universal doctrine in the sense that it produced the same calamitous results whenever its tenets had been applied to actual human conditions. Within this framework, Forster was able to claim that the communist principles of the Anabaptists were the same as those of contemporary socialists. The Anabaptist revolt ‘was the first modern experiment in practical socialism’ and constituted the government ‘from which the socialists of today are pleased to derive their intellectual descent’.¹³⁵ In Munster, the failings of socialism had been particularly clear. The government became the property of ‘a narrow and tyrannical majority’, and an unnatural focus on excessive equality lead to ‘one section after another striving to trample its rivals under foot’.¹³⁶ The end was ‘the sweeping away of the whole devastating apparatus of injustice, cruelty, and folly which have been the sole outcome of the socialist experiment’.¹³⁷

¹³³ Quotes comes from Bax, *Rise*, 391.

¹³⁴ H.O. Arnold-Forster, *English Socialism of Today: Its Teaching and Its Aims Explained* (London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1908), 123-145, 153-163.

¹³⁵ Forster, *English*, 136.

¹³⁶ Forster, *English*, 133.

¹³⁷ Forster, *English*, 133.

Religious conservatives like Joseph Rickaby expressed a different opinion in relation to Christian Communism. Rickaby, while not explicitly referring to the community of goods mentioned in the Bible, discerned that communities organised on the basis of common ownership had been successful in the past.¹³⁸ However, the success of these communities was as a result of three elements missing from contemporary socialism. These included a strong religious spirit, a small membership where the incapable were excluded, and a direct commitment to strict discipline.¹³⁹ By contrast, 'socialism would ask no aid of religion', 'would fain be cosmopolitan', and 'could exclude incapacity only by extermination or incarceration of the incapable'.¹⁴⁰ It also promised 'a rule of fraternity in which the government of persons shall have finally given place to the administration of things'.¹⁴¹ This was a very Conservative vision of the past where ideas related to the maintenance of religion, hierarchy, and duties were paramount. While the experience of history had proven that small-scale religious communities organised on the lines of collective ownership had been successful, socialists were attempting to impose this doctrine 'upon the largest scale all the world over', and there existed no reliable historical precedents for this type of experiment. The good of socialism was all in the future and it would be unspeakably foolish to support a theory that was 'unsupported by experience'.¹⁴²

A more dominant strand of Conservative opinion focused on attacking the historical growth of socialism from the time of the French Revolution onwards. The events of the Revolution were a notable instance of what happened when socialists gained power over a polity. At a meeting of the Redhill Constitutional Club in 1906, the future Conservative MP Captain

¹³⁸ J. Rickaby, *The Creed of Socialism* (London: Anti-Socialist Union Publication Department, 1910), 15.

¹³⁹ Rickaby, *The Creed*, 15.

¹⁴⁰ Rickaby, *The Creed*, 15.

¹⁴¹ Rickaby, *The Creed*, 15.

¹⁴² Rickaby, *The Creed*, 15.

Richard Rawson proclaimed that 'socialism had been tried in the time of the French Revolution and had resulted in the greatest tyranny in that country that the world had ever seen'.¹⁴³ The novelist Hume Nisbet believed that the events of the Revolution were emblematic of what happened when socialists were allowed to put their theories into practice. 'Socialism in power did not uplift and comfort the poor. It corrupted and bribed, made spies, sold its country, and destroyed home and home life'.¹⁴⁴ Socialists were often derided as latter-day Jacobins. Writers like H.A. Bulley, a member of the London Municipal Society, believed that there was 'no distinction to be made between the principles of the Jacobins of 1793 and our socialists of today'.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Hugh Cecil discerned there to be 'many shades of Jacobinism in socialist language'.¹⁴⁶ Both ideologies displayed a blatant disregard for private rights, enacted brutal methods of suppression, and sought to sweep away all existing political and constitutional arrangements. For W. Lawler Wilson, modern socialist tenets such as nationalisation and the class war could be traced to a Jacobin origin. 'There is not a single socialist doctrine of importance at the present day which cannot be traced to its sources either in the precepts or in the practices of the French Revolution, between the rise of the Robespierriest faction and the coming of Napoleon'.¹⁴⁷

The historical allusion with Jacobinism was a particularly important one in Conservative language. As Jones has recently pointed out, anti-Jacobin language had been resurrected by Liberal Unionists like William Lecky and A.V. Dicey in response to the Home Rule Crisis of 1886.¹⁴⁸ Home rulers were portrayed as contemporary Jacobins because they sought to upend

¹⁴³'The Growth of Socialism', *Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser*, 22 Sep. 1906.

¹⁴⁴'Tariff Reform', *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 16 Nov. 1909.

¹⁴⁵'Socialism', *The Times*, (London), 13 Sep. 1906.

¹⁴⁶H. Cecil, *Conservatism* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1912), 248.

¹⁴⁷Wilson, *The Menace*, 102.

¹⁴⁸Jones, 'Conservatism', 1121; 1138; *Edmund Burke*, 146-148.

the delicate balance of the British constitution. This anti-Jacobin critique gained further traction in the Edwardian period as a result of attempts by leading thinkers, such as the aforementioned Cecil, F.E. Smith and Keith Feiling, to historicise and locate the origins of the modern Conservative/Tory tradition in its response to the principles and events of the French Revolution.¹⁴⁹ In these analyses, the excesses of the revolution ensured that Burkean wisdoms, such as the distrust of abstract theorising, hostility to constitutional change, respect for property, order, and religion, and an emphasis on the inheritance of the past, became central to perceptions of Conservative self-identity. Just as Conservatism had initially arisen to combat Jacobin schemes of subversion, Edwardian Conservatives were now faced with a modern re-occurrence of the problem of Jacobinism in the form of a socialist political threat, pertaining to both the Labour Party and the New Liberalism, which sought to overturn established orthodoxies in relation to taxation, public spending, and constitutional precedent.¹⁵⁰ The belief that Conservatives were still operating in the shadow of this revolutionary past was not lost on those who launched the Anti-Socialist Union's newspaper the *Anti-Socialist* in 1909. The avowed aim of the paper was to 'kill socialism as Canning and the Anti-Jacobins killed Jacobinism'.¹⁵¹

The identification of socialism as a version of latter-day Jacobinism was most prominently utilised by Conservatives in the arguments and controversies surrounding the 'People's Budget'. On April 29, 1909, David Lloyd George introduced his budget for the financial year of 1909/1910 in the House of Commons. Lloyd George's budget proposed several tax increases to help provide the funds necessary for increased expenditure on old age pensions and naval

¹⁴⁹ Jones, 'Conservatism', 1128-1137; *Edmund Burke*, 179-194.

¹⁵⁰ Jones, 'Conservatism', 1135; On this point see also J.D. Fair & J.A. Hutcheson, 'British Conservatism in the Twentieth Century: An Emerging Ideological Tradition', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 19 (1990), 554.

¹⁵¹ 'The Anti-Socialist: A New Paper to be Issued on Thursday', *The Observer*, (London), 24 Jan. 1909.

programmes.¹⁵² These taxes included a supertax of 6d on incomes of over £5,000, a related increase in income tax for unearned incomes and for earned incomes over £3,000, a 20 per cent tax on the unearned increment of land values, and raised duties on spirits and tobacco.¹⁵³ These taxes disproportionately affected wealthy groups, such as landowners, brewers, and financiers, which were traditionally key supporters of the Conservative Party.¹⁵⁴ The budget's proposals were denounced by Conservatives because they were perceived as seeking to redistribute wealth through an explicit targeting of those on higher incomes. The budget demonstrated a dangerous attitude towards the rights of private property and reminded many Conservatives of the confiscatory principles that were identified as residing at the core of socialist ideology. These fears were further increased by the overt populism of Lloyd George, particularly in relation to speeches at Newcastle and Limehouse where he had explicitly championed the interests of the people against those of the dukes. The aggressive rhetoric of Lloyd George was pure demagoguery in the eyes of Conservatives like Lord Curzon. The demagogue was a man who endeavoured 'to gain his political ends by appealing to the prejudices of his audiences', in the process, provoking a war on those 'classes to which he himself does not belong'.¹⁵⁵ The Lord's rejection of the budget in November 1909 was predicated on the assumption that it amounted to a declaration of class war. This rejection would be the immediate catalyst for the two general elections of 1910 and the ensuing constitutional crisis. This period of heightened political tensions would eventually end with the erosion of the power of the Lord's veto in the Parliament Act of 1911.

The populist speeches made in support of the budget by Liberal politicians like Lloyd

¹⁵² N. Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties & the People: The General Elections of 1910* (London-Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1972), 68.

¹⁵³ Blewett, *The Peers*, 68-69.

¹⁵⁴ Blewett, *The Peers*, 76-77.

¹⁵⁵ 'Lord Curzon at Leeds: What the Peers may do with the Budget', *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 Oct. 1909.

George and Winston Churchill, who framed the issue in terms of ‘the peers versus the people’, were deemed to have eerie parallels with the rhetoric of Jacobinism in the views of many Conservatives. F.E. Smith retrospectively denounced the whole budget campaign as being motivated by the politics of class hatred. Lloyd George’s rhetoric had been infected with the taints of ‘pure Jacobinism’, dependent on stirring up the passions of ‘envy, hatred, malice and discontent’.¹⁵⁶ At a Conservative fete in September 1909, Sir Charles Hunter denounced the demagogic language that Churchill and Lloyd George had used in speeches glorifying the proposals of the budget. The two liberal leaders reminded him ‘of the two gentlemen in the French Revolution, named Robespierre and Danton’.¹⁵⁷ At a meeting of the Budget Protest League in October 1909, the Conservative MP George Sandys directly criticised the content of Lloyd George’s Newcastle speech. He stated that it ‘reminded him of a gentleman named Robespierre at his worst’.¹⁵⁸ At a public meeting in November 1909, Arthur M. Samuel condemned the land taxes of the budget. Lloyd George had repeatedly said ‘about the land exactly what Robespierre had said in 1789’.¹⁵⁹ Samuel, the Conservative candidate for the parliamentary constituency of Stretford in Lancashire, went on to state that Robespierre’s desire to infringe upon the rights of private property provoked the subsequent reign of terror, and plunged France into nearly twenty-five years of perpetual war. The parting message in Samuel’s speech was that a similar fate awaited England if Lloyd George, ‘the Robespierre of his day’, was able to pass his budget through the Lords.¹⁶⁰ A *Daily Mail* article in the midst of the election campaign of January 1910 echoed some of these sentiments by intimating that there was nothing new in Lloyd George’s attacks on private property. ‘The world had heard all that before. It had

¹⁵⁶ Smith, *Unionist Policy*, 242.

¹⁵⁷ ‘The Unionist Fete’, *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 16 Sep. 1909.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Capt Sandys’, *Wells Journal*, 21 Oct. 1909.

¹⁵⁹ ‘The Modern Robespierre’, *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 13 Oct. 1909.

¹⁶⁰ ‘The Modern Robespierre’.

heard much talk from Robespierre and the Jacobins'.¹⁶¹ The Jacobin attempt to establish a paradise on earth 'had cast the French people into twenty years of the most terrible war in history'.¹⁶²

A related rhetorical strategy portrayed socialist leaders as having masterminded the confiscatory principles of the budget. F.E. Smith believed that the predatory instincts of the budget had been patented by the likes of 'Keir Hardie and Mr Grayson'.¹⁶³ By imitating these socialist leaders, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill were threatening the established rules and structures 'upon which finance and prosperity depended'.¹⁶⁴ A 1909 November *Times* editorial stated that the dreams of Philip Snowden were rapidly being realised in the provisions of the budget.¹⁶⁵ Disputing the claim by the Liberal leader Herbert Asquith that the budget was not socialist, the Duke of Rutland declared that the budget had been the outcome of the pressure put on the present government by socialist leaders.¹⁶⁶

The permeation of the Liberal Party by socialist ideology had historical parallels in the French revolutionary period. In France, the initially dominant position of moderate, democratic reformers had been usurped by a group of 'socialist' Jacobins emboldened by the philosophical teachings of Voltaire, Rousseau, Morelly, Mably Sieyes, and Prevost.¹⁶⁷ These thinkers were portrayed as 'the Fabians of the Revolutionary epoch'.¹⁶⁸ The meeting of the Estates-General in Paris in May 1789 paved the initial path to eventual Jacobin government. Directly mirroring the budget's challenge to the power and privilege of the House of Lords, this 'assembly of dreamers' voted for a single chamber akin to the House of Commons, abolished all

¹⁶¹'The Reformers', *Daily Mail*, (London), 4 Jan. 1910.

¹⁶²'The Reformers'.

¹⁶³ 'Mr F.E. Smith's Speech', *Daily Mail* (London), 13 Aug. 1909.

¹⁶⁴ 'Mr F.E. Smith's Speech'.

¹⁶⁵'The Finance Bill', *The Times*, (London), 4 Nov. 1909.

¹⁶⁶'The Budget', *The Observer*, (London), 19 Sept. 1909.

¹⁶⁷ Anti-Socialist Union, *Socialism Exposed*, 355.

¹⁶⁸ Anti-Socialist Union, *Socialism Exposed*, 355.

class privileges, and proposed a single tax on the land.¹⁶⁹ Without the safeguard of a second chamber, these democratic reforms granted power to any grouping that was willing to appeal to the unenlightened political natures of the masses. This was an opportunity explicitly seized upon by the Jacobin demagogues. The deadly combination of Jacobinism and mob-rule resulted in the execution of the King and Queen, the Reign of Terror, and the coming of Napoleon.¹⁷⁰ The message for contemporary observers was clear: without the House of Lords' veto, there was no safeguard to stop the House of Commons from passing dangerous and unconstitutional forms of legislation. In the words of the tariff reformer E.E. Williams, the mission of the Lords was 'to cry a temporary halt when politicians in power are rushing ahead with schemes which appear to be ill-considered'.¹⁷¹ The attempt to turn the Lords into a mere 'registry office' would empower the commons to pass more forms of socialist legislation like the budget.¹⁷² This would eventually lead to the establishment of socialism in England and the same disastrous results that had been witnessed in revolutionary France.

A more sophisticated analysis of socialism in history was proffered by the famous early-twentieth century archaeologist Flinders Petrie in his 1910 pamphlet *Socialism in Working Order*.¹⁷³ Petrie, a staunch Tory and member of the Anti-Socialist Union, argued for the existence of four distinctive forms of socialism throughout the course of history.¹⁷⁴ The first, military socialism, subordinated the personality and independence of the individual to the needs of the community and was best represented by the ancient Greek city-state of Sparta. The second, peaceful socialism, was best typified by the small ascetic religious communities found in

¹⁶⁹ Anti-Socialist Union, *Socialism and the French Revolution* (London: Anti-Socialist Union Publication Department, 1910), 2.

¹⁷⁰ Anti-Socialist Union, *Socialism*, 2.

¹⁷¹ E.E. Williams, *A Few Plain Words About the House of Lords* (London: Anti-Socialist Union Publication Department, 1911), 1.

¹⁷² 'Burke and the French Revolution', *Liberty* (London), April 1911.

¹⁷³ W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Socialism in Working Order* (London: Anti-Socialist Union Publication Department, 1910).

¹⁷⁴ Flinders Petrie, *Socialism*, 3-11.

Jewish scripture, which renounced all forms of private property in favour of common ownership and equal distribution of resources. The third, commercial socialism, compelled people to work for the financial benefits of the masses and corresponded to the final years of the Roman Empire. This typology of socialist forms was linked to a theory of history and an evolutionary sociology that portrayed socialism as barbaric and symptomatic of earlier societal formations. For Flinders Petrie, 'socialism was far more general in the ruder and earlier stages of society, than it is in the later and more civilised times'.¹⁷⁵ The socialist characteristics of earlier tribe societies had preceded the onset of the 'individual system'. Such statements bear notable similarities to the thought of Henry Maine and Herbert Spencer, both of whom portrayed historical development as a process involving a transition from custom-bound hierarchical communities to ones based on liberty and freedom of contract.¹⁷⁶ Spencer, in particular, asserted that history was the record of mankind's emancipation from socialism and that the final decades of the nineteenth century had witnessed an atavistic reversion towards this superseded social order.¹⁷⁷ Flinders Petrie shared these concerns, identifying the theories of contemporary socialism as being operative in the workings of 'most savage tribes', but differed from Spencer in one key aspect. The latter argued that the telos of history lay in the establishment of an anarchic, free-market utopia whereas the former advocated a more intermediary position. 'Official despotic socialism' and 'anarchic individualism' alike were to be discarded in favour of a system of government that carefully guarded against the worst tendencies of both systems, promoting, instead, the utilitarian goal of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Flinders Petrie, *Socialism*, 2.

¹⁷⁶ Taylor, *Men*, 167-168, 173.

¹⁷⁷ Taylor, *Men*, 182-190.

¹⁷⁸ Flinders Petrie, *Socialism*, 12.

W.H. Mallock, arguably the most influential anti-socialist polemicist of the early-twentieth century, asserted that socialism was a modern phenomenon but one that predated the onset of the French and Industrial revolutions. In his 1909 essay 'A Century of Socialistic Experiments', Mallock presented a historically-specific critique of socialism, identifying its genesis in the practices of late-eighteenth century utopian communities in America.¹⁷⁹ Rather than a mere recapitulation of fallacies ancient in origin, socialism had existed at least twenty years before the fall of the Ancien regime in France and predated the coinage of the term by Robert Owen in the 1820s by a near half-century. Mallock, here, was specifically referring to the example of the Shakers, a small Christian sect led by Ann Lee, an Englishwoman who had emigrated to America with her follower in the hope of establishing a society in accordance with the divine teachings of the Bible. The essential economic principle of the Shakers, Mallock noted, related to the collective possession of resources and was identical to the contemporary socialist doctrine of state ownership.¹⁸⁰ The Shakers were joined in North America fifty years later by another religious group called the Rappites, again, like the former group, named after their leader, a farmer's son from southern Germany named George Rapp. Mallock recognised that the Shakers and the Rappites were primarily motivated by Christian impulses but they shared, he believed, the same fundamental economic ideals as Edwardian socialists.¹⁸¹ Religious millennialists and secular socialists alike sought to abolish all private initiative and advocated for the equal distribution of resources regardless of effort and work tendered. The economic principles were also salient in the doctrines of subsequent socialists such as Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Karl Marx.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ W.H. Mallock, 'A Century of Socialistic Experiments', *The Dublin Review*, 145 (1909), 80.

¹⁸⁰ Mallock, 'A Century', 81.

¹⁸¹ Mallock, 'A Century', 82.

¹⁸² Mallock, 'A Century', 82-84.

This represented a highly controversial claim in relation to Marx who had famously dismissed the 'fantastic pictures of future society' espoused by 'utopian' socialists ignorant of the dialectical laws that shaped historical development.¹⁸³ In earlier works such as 1907's *Socialism* and 1908's *A Critical Examination of Socialism*, Mallock had made no reference to this purported lineage and instead concentrated his attacks on Marx's economic theories, especially his use of the labour theory of value, and accepted the proposition that the 'definite theoretical nucleus of ...socialism dates from the middle of the nineteenth century'.¹⁸⁴ The essay 'A Century of Socialistic Experiments' represented a new departure for Mallock in a theoretical sense and from his study he gleaned a number of key generalisations about the historical progress of socialism. The record of socialist experiments demonstrated that attempts to free people from the constraints of private property, and existing economic and social inequalities met an inglorious end once discipline slackened and inhabitants were empowered to pursue their own individual interests, and thusly making themselves indistinguishable from the citizens of the ordinary world around them.¹⁸⁵ Echoing the insights of Joseph Rickaby, Mallock argued that religious communities practising common ownership experienced greater degrees of stability and longevity than their secular equivalents on account of their strict vetting procedures, monastic sense of discipline and a 'religious enthusiasm of a kind so rare and exceptional as to be wholly outside the potentialities of ordinary men and women'.¹⁸⁶

The tariff reform and radical conservative W. Lawlor Wilson provided a further historic

¹⁸³ K. Marx, F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, ed. and trans. F. Engels, (Chicago, Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1910), 55.

¹⁸⁴ W.H. Mallock, *Socialism* (New York: the National Civil Federation, 1907); for the quote see *A Critical Examination of Socialism* (London: John Murray, 1908), xi.

¹⁸⁵ Mallock, 'A Century', 98, 102, 103-104.

¹⁸⁶ Mallock, 'A Century', 96, 100.

survey of socialism in the same year as Mallock. In *the Menace of Socialism*, Wilson argued that British socialism could not be evaluated in isolation from the wider 'insurrectionary movement' that had blighted the continent of Europe since the time of the French Revolution.¹⁸⁷ Organic in character and European in scope, the 'proletarian insurrectionary movement' was informed by revolutionary ambitions and had gained credibility and strength from the strains of industrialisation. It constituted primarily an uprising against the existing social order and tended towards the 'communisation of possessions'.¹⁸⁸ Over the course of the nineteenth century and proceeding with vigour into the twentieth, proponents of the socialist class war usually struck during opportune moments when governments and nations were weak. Wilson specifically cited the overthrow of the French monarchy during the revolutionary turmoil of 1848, the establishment of the Paris Commune in 1871 which coincided with military setbacks during the Franco-Prussian war, the proto-anarchist Cantonist uprising in Spain in 1873, and the Russian Revolution of 1905 as moments when the insurrectionary movement exploited a power vacuum and imposed its own agenda on the proletariat.¹⁸⁹ The lesson for contemporary politicians committed to the continuation of the existing order of things was clear; 'the whole course of evolution followed by the proletarian insurrectionary movement is our assurance that other outbreaks must occur'.¹⁹⁰ He deemed Germany, France, Austria, England to be the country's most at risk, interestingly leaving out the case of Russia where the first communist revolution would break out nearly a decade later.¹⁹¹ The European revolution could not be averted but Lawler believed that England could be spared the worst

¹⁸⁷ Wilson, *The Menace*, 73.

¹⁸⁸ Wilson, *The Menace*, 142-143.

¹⁸⁹ Wilson, *The Menace*, 225, 226.

¹⁹⁰ Wilson, *The Menace*, 228.

¹⁹¹ Wilson, *The Menace*, 228.

of its effects by 'the adoption of a national policy of State action on Anti-Socialist lines'.¹⁹²

II

The following section focuses on the Edwardian 'Right to Work' debate. This case study has been chosen because the right to work was a principle that provoked the passions of both socialists and anti-socialists. For many anti-socialists, mainly those of a Conservative, Liberal Unionist or moderate Liberal persuasion, the right to work was best disproven through reference to the historical experience of the French National Workshops of 1848, which pertinently illustrated the follies of an interventionist unemployment strategy. This case study also allows the chapter to demonstrate how these seemingly abstracted historical critiques could apply to a specific policy, the Labour Party's Unemployed Workmen's Act, and principle, the right to work. Both were considered socialist by the bulk of contemporary opinion in the Edwardian period. Many Liberals pledged their opposition to the right to work, and the case study investigates their hostility to the principle.

The right to work principle was of vital importance to the political thought and practice of the Labour Party in the opening years of the twentieth century. Ramsay MacDonald argued that it was one of the central 'political demands of socialism' and illustrated 'in a definite and practical form the intention and meaning of the socialist's immediate demands'.¹⁹³ For his fellow Scot and Labour leader, Keir Hardie, the right to work provided the best solution for the periodically recurring 'condition of the people' question.¹⁹⁴ Independent Labour Party activists Russell Smart and Tom Mann believed that the state was ultimately responsible for the maintenance of a system that made mass unemployment a reality.¹⁹⁵ As a result of this

¹⁹² Wilson, *The Menace*, 233.

¹⁹³ R. MacDonald, *The Socialist Movement* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1911), 163, 169.

¹⁹⁴ 'Mr. Keir Hardie on Labour Questions', *The Times* (London), 13 Apr. 1908.

¹⁹⁵ T. Mann, *The Programme of the I.L.P and the Unemployed* (London: "Clarion" Newspaper co., 1895), 10-11;

accountability, the state possessed a consequent duty to alleviate some of the suffering caused by the indignity of being unable to work. Pat Thane has noted that the approach of the early Labour Party to the issues of social reform and state welfare was best embodied in the theory of the right to work.¹⁹⁶ The state in a socialist society would strive to maximise opportunities for employment and where this was impossible or unrealistic individuals had a moral right to expect a publicly funded level of support that would uphold their moral dignity.¹⁹⁷ This system of rights was to be counterbalanced by responsibilities on the part of the individual to work whenever work presented itself.¹⁹⁸

The right to work was never merely the preserve of socialists but was also advocated by broad sections of progressive opinion in the early twentieth century. In 1911's *Liberalism*, L.T. Hobhouse asserted that the right to work, in tandem with a living wage, was just 'as valid as the rights of persons and property'.¹⁹⁹ Both were 'integral conditions of a good social order'.²⁰⁰ J.A. Hobson argued that 'organised society should make provision for those who incur...losses in its service'.²⁰¹ Individuals, therefore, possessed a justifiable right to call upon the state to provide them with work. Percy Alden, the radical social reformer and leading activist on behalf of those out of work, called for an extensive system of public works, funded partly by taxpayer contributions, to counteract the structural causes of unemployment.²⁰²

H.R Smart, *The Right to Work* (Manchester: Labour Press Society, 1896), 2-6.

¹⁹⁶ P. Thane, 'Labour and Welfare', D. Tanner & P. Thane & N. Tiratsoo (eds.), *Labour's First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 80.

¹⁹⁷ P. Thane, 'Labour and Local Politics: Radicalism, Democracy and Social Reform, 1880-1914', in E.F. Biagini & A.J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 268.

¹⁹⁸ Thane, 'Labour and Welfare', 80-81.

¹⁹⁹ L.T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1919), 159.

²⁰⁰ Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, 159.

²⁰¹ Quoted in Freedman, *New Liberalism*, 219.

²⁰² P. Alden, *The Unemployed: A National Question* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1905), 101.

These abstract justifications of the right to work provided the theoretical basis for a political campaign that demanded the provision of employment for the unemployed by public authorities. The focal point of the right to work campaign was the introduction of the Labour Party's Unemployed Workmen's Bill into the House of Commons in July 1907. The party also organised a wave of extra-parliamentary agitation, coordinating with trade unions, radicals and other socialist groups such as the Social Democratic Federation in support of the bill. The bill was extensively defeated on its second reading in March 1908 amidst a flurry of accusations that its provisions were socialist. The Labour Party's attempts to enact a legislative bill on unemployment would subsequently be eclipsed by Liberal welfare reforms such as the Labour Exchanges Act of 1909 and the National Insurance Act of 1911.

Conservative, Liberal Unionist and Liberal anti-socialists, especially those still loyal to the Gladstonian doctrines of fiscal rectitude and limited state intervention, commonly deployed a historical framework to justify their opposition to the right to work. Referencing the failure of the National Workshops in Paris during the revolution of 1848, they argued that state provision of employment threatened private enterprise, discouraged self-reliance and individual effort, and potentially represented the first stepping stone on the path towards a future socialist state. The socialist right to work was especially egregious because it argued that public/relief works should be funded out of the rates and that workers employed on such schemes were to be entitled to standard rates of wages. These principles, it was believed, had been implemented in Paris in 1848, workers' wages were paid out of the public purse with little regard to the amount or actual value of the labour done and after a few disastrous months the whole experiment had collapsed due to its ignorance of fundamental economic precepts. Edwardian socialist proponents of the right to work were moving with the easy confidence that sprung from an ignorance of these historical lessons. It is important to note

that the socialist right to work, and its pledge to provide employment at standard rates of wages, commonly pegged to trade union levels, proved especially off-putting to most sections of political opinion. This critique was largely present-minded in focus and largely ignored analogies of a historical nature. The next section considers the historical roots of the right to work in socialist thought and outlines the development of the politics of the unemployed in Britain from the 1880s onwards.

The roots of the right to work principle can be traced to the late eighteenth century. Thomas Paine promoted the idea that individuals had a right to remunerated employment in the second part of his 1789 work *Rights of Man*. Paine believed that the government should erect public buildings ‘containing at least six thousand persons, and to have in each of these places as many kinds of employment that can be contrived’.²⁰³ Employment was to be provided at all times ‘for the casual poor of the cities of Westminster and London’.²⁰⁴ The idea of the right to work was also present in the tumult of the French Revolution. The revolution accelerated existing eighteenth century trends that emphasised awareness of society’s obligation towards the upkeep of its poorer members.²⁰⁵ A variation on the Jacobin’s right to subsistence and an explicit recognition that citizenship contained economic as well as political components, the right to work was a central principle of the French constitution from at least 1793.²⁰⁶ The right to work was also central to the theory and practice of later socialists like Charles Fourier and Louis Blanc. A stern critic of the equality of rights maxim, Fourier believed that ‘the first right of men is the right to work’.²⁰⁷ In service of this goal, Fourier conceived of

²⁰³ T. Paine, *Rights of Man: Part the Second: Combining Principle and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50.

²⁰⁴ Paine, *Rights of Man*, 51.

²⁰⁵ A. Forrest, *The French Revolution and the Poor* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 13-15.

²⁰⁶ G. Claeys, ‘Socialism and the Language of Rights: The Origins and Implications of Economic Rights’, in P. Slotte & M.H-Tuomisaari (eds.), *Revisiting the Origins of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 223.

²⁰⁷ Fourier, ‘Critique of the Revolutionary Ideals’.

the establishment of a number of self-contained co-operative communities named phalansteres. They operated on the principle that each member of the community would work together for the mutual benefit of the collective. Accordingly, the phalansteres were envisioned as joint-stock companies with each individual member holding shares.²⁰⁸ Owing to financial troubles, Fourier was never able to put his theories into practice. Following in the wake of Fourier but jettisoning his emphasis on small-scale communities, Louis Blanc proposed that democratically elected governments should organise employment by guaranteeing the right to work.²⁰⁹ Blanc also believed that the state should provide workers with lines of credit so that they could form producer's workshops within their own trades.²¹⁰ These workshops, termed in most contemporary and subsequent scholarly parlance as 'social workshops', were voluntary organisations of producers where the instruments of production had been provided by the state.²¹¹ The co-operative ethos of the 'social workshops' would ultimately quash the evils of free competition and usher in a new world where producers laboured for the common good.

Blanc was also a key member of the French republican government that established a system of national workshops in Paris in 1848. The decree that established the workshops 'based them on the solemnly proclaimed right of all citizens to work', and the designation of the workshops as national implied that they were a fundamental institution of the republic.²¹² However, the employment provided under the aegis of the workshops was often rudimentary, differing little from the charity workshops that had been set up by the ancien regime in earlier

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/fourier/works/ch15.htm> [accessed 12 May 2016].

²⁰⁸ A. Birnie, *An Economic History of Europe, 1760-1930* (London: Meuthen, 1930), 115.

²⁰⁹ J. Beecher, 'Early European Socialism', in G. Klosko (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 378.

²¹⁰ Beecher, 'Early', 378.

²¹¹ Beecher, 'Early', 378.

²¹² W. Sewell, *Work & Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 246.

times.²¹³ The organisation and operation of the workshops deviated substantially from Blanc's proposals for 'social workshops'. Devised as a temporary expedient to alleviate the plight of the urban poor during a period of industrial and commercial contraction, they ignored the co-operative elements of the social workshops, were funded entirely from government loans and did nothing to empower workers to form their own producers' associations.²¹⁴ The national workshops were closed down by the French government, on the grounds of cost and the fact that their presence concentrated high numbers of the unemployed in Paris, after four months in operation.²¹⁵ Histories of the 1848 revolution in France often claim that the national workshops were instruments of social control, alluding to the statements of republican leaders like Alphonse De Lamartine who stated that 'they were merely an expedient for keeping order, a rude auxiliary summoned on the morrow of the revolution by the necessity of feeding the people'.²¹⁶ The reasoning surrounding the decision to close the national workshops in July 1848 became a topic of heated debate amongst socialists and anti-socialists in Edwardian Britain. Socialists, citing the statements of leading figures in the French republican government, argued that the workshops had been designed to fail. Anti-socialists, on the contrary, contended that the principle of the right to work was to blame.

In the 1880's, unemployment was recognised for the first time as a chronic social problem affecting large sections of the working classes.²¹⁷ Socialist organisations, the Social Democratic Federation being the most prominent, responded by organising political marches and

²¹³ Sewell, *Work*, 246.

²¹⁴ E. Berenson, 'Organization and Modernisation in the Revolutions of 1848', in D. Dowe, H-G. Haupt, D. Langewiesche & J. Sperber (eds.), *Europe in 1848: Revolution and Reform* (New York: Bergahn Books, 2000), 563.

²¹⁵ Beecher, 'Early', 378.

²¹⁶ M. Traugott, *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of 1848* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 119; for the workshops as a force for the preservation of order see J. Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 211.

²¹⁷ J. Harris, *Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 7.

demonstrations in support of the rights of the unemployed.²¹⁸ This agitation largely focused on the provision of public work or relief for the unemployed and was cast into the public eye by violent events like the Bloody Sunday riot of 1887, where metropolitan police officers baton charged demonstrators protesting against rising rates of unemployment and Irish coercion policy in Trafalgar Square.²¹⁹ In concert with these developments, cross-party deputations, acting on behalf of the unemployed, lobbied local authorities and government ministers to act on the issue of unemployment. In 1885, the journalist Arnold White led one such deputation to an interview at the Home Office with the Liberal home secretary William Harcourt.²²⁰ White explained to Harcourt that the deputation sought relief for the unemployed through schemes of public works and suggested that employment might be found for some men on the Thames. Harcourt responded by declaring his complete and utter opposition to the sorts of relief works suggested by White. Harcourt explicitly cited the example of the national workshops to underpin his argument. The national workshops failed because they had proceeded in complete ignorance of the fact that government was unable to skilfully utilise the employment of labour. The labour market was the domain of the 'private employer and the capitalist' and any government interference in its workings 'drove away a great deal more of capital than it brought in'.²²¹

A similar situation arose in 1888 when a deputation of unemployed men was received by Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office. Cardinal Henry Manning, one of the leaders of the deputation, appealed to Salisbury on behalf of the unemployed by asserting 'that under the Poor Law there ought to be wage work at such a moment as this, for unemployed, honest and

²¹⁸ Harris, *Unemployment*, 55-57.

²¹⁹ H. Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 43.

²²⁰ 'The Distress in London', *The Times*, (London), Feb 9. 1885.

²²¹ 'The Distress in London'.

deserving men'.²²² Manning employed a historical appeal in support of his claim; declaring that the statutes of the Elizabethan poor law contained provisions 'for giving work to those who, through vicissitudes or changes of the moment, were thrown out of employment'.²²³ Salisbury's response compared Manning's proposals to be analogous to the solutions offered up by the national workshops. The workshops had operated on the principle that 'labour was offered to all who wanted it, earning the ordinary wages of labour'.²²⁴ Salisbury continued by stating that the state should never by-pass the private employer and seek to establish an economic relationship with the working classes.

The views of Harcourt and Salisbury were reflective of an orthodox belief in classical political economy that depicted large-scale schemes of public works as infringing on the economic freedom of employers and employees. Both of these agents possessed the ability to enter into economic relationships on a voluntary and contractual basis without the coercion of a central body like the state. The socialist proposal that workers employed under the terms of public works schemes should be maintained at standard levels of daily pay would drive private capitalists out of business. Under a relief-based system of public employment, the lack of a price mechanism meant that workers would not render services to the maximum of their abilities. The attempt to employ men on schemes of public works was also a violation of the economic law that the free market would always tend towards full employment equilibrium if left to its own devices; meaning that work was always available to those that desired it. The unemployed were a category of persons who made a conscious choice not to work at the prevailing wage levels offered, and any attempt to maintain them at subsistence levels would keep them in a permanent state of dependence. Anti-Socialists invoking the demise of the

²²² 'The Government and the Unemployed', *The Times*, (London), 2 Feb. 1888.

²²³ 'The Government and the Unemployed', *The Times*, (London), 2 Feb. 1888.

²²⁴ The Government and the Unemployed'.

Parisian National Workshops in 1848 generally adhered to this line of economic analysis.

Such trenchant opposition to an interventionist unemployment strategy was becoming increasingly out of date by the late nineteenth century. The work of Jose Harris has shown that the prevailing sections of political opinion were coming round to the idea that some form of public work provision was necessary to counteract the ill-effects of unemployment.²²⁵ However, the doctrine of the socialist right to work remained controversial to most sections of political opinion because of its insistence that local/state authorities should be compelled to provide work for the unemployed at standard rates of wages and the proposal to fund such labour from rate-aid. These criticisms would be deployed against the concerted attempts by socialists, trade unionists and radical-liberals to pressure the state into enacting a national legislative policy that would deal with the problem of unemployment in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The passing of the Conservative Party's Unemployed Workmen's Act of 1905 was a key milestone in this process. The act established distress committees empowered with the mission of obtaining work for the unemployed in London and other large urban areas.²²⁶ The labour movement's reaction to the Bill was beset by division; many labour leaders saw the bill as an explicit acknowledgement of the state's responsibility for the unemployed and a tacit recognition of the right to work.²²⁷ However, the weaknesses of the act from a socialist point of view were obvious. The act had a limited eligibility clause that excluded from its terms 'loafers, work-shyers... and any workman out of work through fault of his own'.²²⁸ Workers

²²⁵ Harris, *Unemployment*, 73-74.

²²⁶ R.A. Leach, *The Unemployed Workmen Act, 1905* (Rochdale: Local Government and Printing Company, 1905), 18.

²²⁷ K.D. Brown, *Labour and Unemployment 1900-1914* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), 54-58.

²²⁸ HC Deb 20 June 1905, vol 147, cc1116.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1905-06-20/debates/4d85d8a7-23aa-47a9-ba1f-5e827e444d63/UnemployedWorkmenBill> [accessed 20 February 2018].

employed under its remit were to be paid less than the average unskilled labourer engaged in private enterprise and wages were to be funded from voluntary contributions rather than rate aid. The money recovered from the rates could only be spent on the 'official costs, labour exchanges, migration, emigration or the acquisition of land for the purposes of the act'.²²⁹ These restricted terms did not stop the act's critics from comparing it to the failure of the national workshops in 1848. The most sustained opposition came from the Conservative MP and Charity Organisation Society member George Bartley. Bartley decried the act as being an explicit justification of the principle that people had 'the right to obtain employment when they could not, or did not get it by themselves'.²³⁰ This solution to the problem of unemployment had been tried in the 'municipal workshops of Paris in 1848'.²³¹ The workshops were underpinned by the principle of the right to work. 'It was declared to be the duty of the state to guarantee work to every citizen- in the language of the present day to provide work for the unemployed'.²³² Men registered with local authorities and received a guaranteed level of wages regardless of input or productivity. As payment was assured, the pace of work slackened, resulting in the production of poor-quality goods. The results of this system of relief work were unsurprisingly disastrous. Private factories closed down, trade became increasingly disorganised and unemployment sky-rocketed to hitherto unknown levels. In light of this historical example, 'it was sad to think that our own legislature, unmindful of all the experience of the past, should contemplate beginning such a scheme'.²³³

The limited time-frame of the Unemployed Workmen's Act, which was intended to last only three years pending the investigation of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, meant

²²⁹ Leach, *The Unemployed*, 110-11, 21.

²³⁰ HC Deb 20 June 1905, vol 147, cc 1129.

²³¹ HC Deb 20 June 1905, vol 147, cc1145.

²³² HC Deb 20 June 1905, vol 147, cc 1145.

²³³ HC Deb 20 June 1905, vol 147, cc 1147.

that it received very little support from the incoming Liberal administration of 1906.²³⁴ The issue of how to best tackle the problem of unemployment provoked serious divisions within the Liberal Party. The Gladstone memorandum of 1903, which outlined a proposed Liberal strategy on unemployment, argued that the central state should be responsible for the plight of the unemployed.²³⁵ Public works schemes were posited as being the practical manifestation of this principle. This solution did not differ markedly from the socialist one, causing consternation among Liberals like William Fowler who declared that the 'permanent establishment of centralised public works would be tantamount to national workshops'.²³⁶ These fears would be most prominently expressed by the veteran Liberal politician John Morley.

At a meeting of the Walthamstow Liberal Association in November 1905, Morley outlined his opposition to any scheme that sought to provide work or relief for the unemployed at the expense of ratepayers.²³⁷ Any plan to increase the financial burden on ratepayers would greatly increase the 'numbers of the unemployed'.²³⁸ Morley illustrated this point by referring to the national workshops. The national workshops of 1848 had been financed 'out of the pockets of the country'.²³⁹ Men had withdrawn from private enterprise and were forced to labour under the aegis of the workshops. The ensuing results had been catastrophic with 'industry dislocated and finance destroyed'.²⁴⁰ Morley ended his speech on a more positive note, stating that the historical failure of the workshops would never be repeated in England because of the 'widely held qualities of sanity, sobriety, and self-control'.²⁴¹ Morley would repeat these sentiments two months later in a meeting with a deputation of labour and socialist

²³⁴ Harris, *Unemployment*, 167.

²³⁵ Harris, *Unemployment*, 219-223.

²³⁶ Quoted in Harris, *Unemployment*, 223.

²³⁷ 'Eye of Triumph: Mr Morley's Prediction', *Daily News*, (London), 21 Nov. 1905.

²³⁸ 'Eye of Triumph: Mr Morley's Prediction'.

²³⁹ 'Eye of Triumph: Mr Morley's Prediction'.

²⁴⁰ 'Eye of Triumph: Mr Morley's Prediction'.

²⁴¹ 'Eye of Triumph: Mr Morley's Prediction'.

bodies in Arbroath in Scotland.²⁴² The deputation called on Morley to support an amendment to the Unemployed Workmen's Act that would give distress committees power to undertake public works at standard rates of wages; the whole cost to be met from public funds. One of the members of the deputation also stated that it 'was the right of everybody born to have the opportunity of earning their living in their country and that when private enterprise failed to supply that opportunity it was the duty of the state to secure it'.²⁴³ Morley responded by taking direct aim at the principle of the right to work; the idea that any man was owed employment by the state was fundamentally unsound. The practical application of this principle, again citing the example of the national workshops, would only serve to increase the numbers of the unemployed.²⁴⁴ The folly of large-scale schemes of public employment had been demonstrated most pertinently by the failure of the workshops.

The above examples are indicative of some of the hostile attitudes that many Liberals, particularly those on the centre and right of the party, held toward unemployment strategies that promoted a greater role for the state. The prevalence of these beliefs hampered attempts by progressive liberals to persuade the party leadership to adopt an interventionist approach in relation to the issue of unemployment in the immediate years after 1906. The relative inaction of the Liberal Party on the issue of unemployment and the ineffective implementation of the Unemployed Workmen's Act played a major role in motivating the Labour Party to create its own legislative bill on unemployment. The most immediate catalyst for action lay in the failure of the Liberal government to include any measures dealing with unemployment in the King's speech of 1907.²⁴⁵ On July 9, 1907, Ramsay MacDonald introduced the party's

²⁴² 'Mr Morley on Socialism', *Daily News*, (London), 6 Jan. 1906.

²⁴³ 'Mr Morley on Socialism'.

²⁴⁴ 'Mr Morley on Socialism'.

²⁴⁵ Brown, *Labour*, 79.

Unemployed Workmen's Bill, which would become known in popular parlance as the 'Right to Work' bill, into the House of Commons. The bill was predicated on the notion that the state had a duty to assist the unemployed. It proposed that urban and rural districts should act as local unemployment authorities and work together in creating schemes of employment for the unemployed.²⁴⁶ Wages for this work would be paid out of the rates of each local authority and the bill would establish a central unemployment committee that would be responsible for coordinating the activities of the local committees.²⁴⁷ Importantly, the wording of the bill did not refer to standard rates of pay and specified, instead a living wage for workers employed under its remit.²⁴⁸ This subtle change of wording was significant and included most likely to appeal to sections of opinion explicitly wary of socialist proposals. Critics in the ensuing debates over the bill largely ignored this revision of terms and utilised the conventional argument that the jobless were to be maintained at standard wage levels. The principle of the right of the work was embodied in the bill's third clause which recognised that 'where a workman has registered himself as unemployed, it shall be the duty of the local unemployment authority to provide work for him'.²⁴⁹ However, the burden of responsibility did not just lie with the state. The duty of the state towards a member of the unemployed would be revoked if he/she refused employment under the terms offered by the bill.²⁵⁰ This was emblematic of the idea that clause three was 'a Right to Work clause and not a Right to Dole clause'.²⁵¹ The bill did not receive a second reading in the Commons in 1907 as a result of the legislative back-up caused by the Lord's thwarting of the Liberal government's legislative agenda, and also because the

²⁴⁶ J.R. MacDonald, *The New Unemployed Bill of the Labour Party* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1907), 5.

²⁴⁷ MacDonald, *The New Unemployed*, 5, 8.

²⁴⁸ MacDonald, *The New Unemployed*, 7.

²⁴⁹ MacDonald, *The New Unemployed*, 6.

²⁵⁰ MacDonald, *The New Unemployed*, 7.

²⁵¹ MacDonald, *The New Unemployed*, 7

right to work principle was still disproved of by large sections of Liberal opinion.²⁵²

John Burns, the former socialist and the president of the Local Government Board, articulated why the right to work principle was so divisive when responding to a speech in the Commons by the socialist Will Crooks. Crooks had bemoaned the fact that the King's speech of 1907 had not mentioned the issue of unemployment.²⁵³ Burns attacked Crooks for falsely representing the interests of labour. 'No friend of labour' would advocate proposals that were similar to the ones attempted in Paris in 1848.²⁵⁴ The mistakes of the national workshops were now being repeated in the 'pauperising relief' remedies of the socialists.²⁵⁵ Socialist relief works would put a premium on casual labour and incentivise the status of unemployment. An editorial in the *Daily News*, a newspaper representative of progressive liberal opinion, relayed a different perspective on socialist unemployment policies. The editorial stated that 'some ardent followers look to the development of collectivist industries by the establishment of national workshops for the unemployed'.²⁵⁶ This was posited as the method by which the demand for socialism had been destroyed in France in 1848. If the state was to start up industry, it should target those sectors of the workforce that were the most efficient and not those who had been cast aside by private industry.²⁵⁷ Support for this 'less eligibility' clause was also espoused by J.A. Hobson who argued that the 'notion prevalent in certain socialist quarters that any unemployed worker should be at liberty to call upon his municipality to find him work in his own trade at the union rate of wages cannot....be seriously entertained'.²⁵⁸ The name of

²⁵² Brown, *Labour*, 84, 89-92.

²⁵³ HC Deb 20 February 1907, vol 169, cc 949-952.

https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1907/feb/20/kings-speech-motion-for-an-address#S4V0169P0_19070220_HOC_310 [Accessed 21 February 2016].

²⁵⁴ HC Deb 20 February 1907, vol 169, cc 954.

²⁵⁵ HC Deb 20 February 1907, vol 169, cc 954.

²⁵⁶ 'Today at Hull', *Daily News*, (London), 18 Jan. 1908.

²⁵⁷ 'Today at Hull'.

²⁵⁸ 'The State and the Unemployed', *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 Mar. 1908; For this 'less eligibility' argument amongst Liberals in relation to the right to work see Freedman, *New Liberalism*, 214-215.

socialism would be forever tainted by an 'experiment with the least efficient material and drawn from the weakest and least organised trades'.²⁵⁹ 'The failure would be signal and complete'.²⁶⁰ Hobson, it is important to note, opposed the Labour Party's implementation of the right to work rather than the principle itself.

The spectre of the workshops would hover over the subsequent re-introduction of the 'Right to Work' bill in March 1908 by the radical liberal MP P. W. Wilson. When introducing the bill in the Commons, Wilson referenced criticisms that compared it to the national workshops, deeming to be inapplicable to modern British conditions. 'You take a city in a state of revolution, with barricades in the street...and you say that it is a fair parallel to a country which has enjoyed sixty years of unmistakeable progress and pacific social development'.²⁶¹ Eventually defeated by a decisive majority of 150 votes, the *Daily News* expressed the opinion that the members who opposed the bill were motivated to do so because they detected the hint of socialism in the right to work principle.²⁶² The enshrinement of the right to work would lead immediately to the establishment of national workshops where the unemployed would be remunerated at trade union levels of wages. 'Few such disastrous experiments would make the very name of socialism stink in the nostrils of all thoughtful observers'.²⁶³ The radical liberal J.T. Martindale, addressing a December 1908 meeting of the party's youth wing in Burnley, declared that clause three of the Labour Party's bill reminded him of the principles of the national workshops, 'where any man could employ himself and receive the ordinary rate as paid for similar goods elsewhere'.²⁶⁴ The workshops 'went on for a week or two but there arose

²⁵⁹ 'The State and the Unemployed'

²⁶⁰ 'The State and the Unemployed'

²⁶¹ HC Deb 13 March 1908, vol 186, cc 16-17.

²⁶² 'The Problem of the Workless', *Daily News*, (London), 14 March 1908.

²⁶³ 'The Problem of the Workless',

²⁶⁴ 'For Unemployment', *Burnley Gazette*, 16 Dec. 1908

such a state of chaos that they had to be abandoned'.²⁶⁵ Martindale's intervention demonstrates that liberal politicians and intellectuals, of which we can include Hobson as the example above shows, continually misrepresented the bill as sanctioning the payment of standard wages for the unemployed. This was allied to criticisms pertaining to the socialist character of the right to work principle. Herbert Asquith, for example, claimed that clause three of the bill was animated by a 'principle which involves in its application... the complete ultimate control by the state of the full machinery of production'.²⁶⁶ George Pudsey, the Liberal chief whip, cautioned against what he saw as a widespread tendency with the party to embrace 'a chronic state of semi-socialism'.²⁶⁷ Any further acceleration of this development, he declared, would result in a party split with the consequent loss of 'the vast bulk of that moderate opinion which had been the backbone of Liberalism for fifty years'.²⁶⁸

Conservative commentators such as W.G. Towler, the secretary of the London Municipal Society, also depicted the attempt to establish the right to work into the statute book of British law as merely recapitulating the 'disastrous experiment which was tried in France in 1848'.²⁶⁹ An article by T.H. Manners Howe in the *Graphic* referenced 'the insidious, but historically refuted doctrine of the right to work, embodied in the Socialist principle of rate-supported labour'. The Conservative historian, John Marriott, provided a more rigorous intellectual analysis of the Edwardian right to work debate and its parallels with the events of revolutionary Paris sixty years earlier. Marriott insisted that the essential principles of the bill and 'of the experiment tried with disastrous results in 1848' were 'not merely similar but

²⁶⁵ HC Deb 13 March 1908, vol 186, cc 86.

²⁶⁶ 'Whip's Warning', *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 Mar. 1908.

²⁶⁷ 'Whip's Warning'.

²⁶⁸ W.G. Towler, *Socialism in Local Government* (London: George Allen & Sons, 1909), 292.

²⁶⁹ T.H. Manners Howe, 'The Unemployed Question', *The Graphic*, 78 (Oct. 1908), 486.

identical'.²⁷⁰ The story of the national workshops had pertinent relevance for the student of contemporary politics in England as the Liberal Party, just like the French Republicans, were allied to 'social democrats' who looked forward 'to the speedy realisation of a social millennium'.²⁷¹ Decreeing the falsehoods of natural rights theories, Marriott believed that no man possessed an inherent claim to demand employment from the state.²⁷² The failure of the Parisian experiment was not attributable to reasons of circumstances and context but rather resided in the faultiness of its logic, which was 'radical and fundamentally false'.²⁷³

III

How did Socialists respond to these historical critiques? Socialists sought solace in their theories of historical development when confronted by accusations that the doctrines and methods of their creed were disproven by the authority of the past. For Sidney Webb, modern socialism was merely 'the conscious adoption of a social organisation which the world has already found to be the inevitable outcome of democracy and the industrial revolution'.²⁷⁴ Webb applied evolutionary theory to the study of human societies and deduced that socialism was the next, sequential stage in a progressive process that had previously seen individualism emerge out of feudalism. Socialism was the next inevitable growth of the social organism and would eventually supersede an individualist system that had enshrined the dominance of private property. It would replace the profit motive with a system that geared production towards the needs of the community.²⁷⁵ Socialism was already being unconsciously realised within the existing remnants of the individualist system through society's growing adoption

²⁷⁰ J.A.R. Marriott, 'The 'Right to Work'', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 63, Jan-Jun. 1908, 1003.

²⁷¹ Marriott, 'The', 1008.

²⁷² Marriott, 'The', 1008.

²⁷³ Marriott, 'The', 1008.

²⁷⁴ Webb, 'Historic Basis', 32.

²⁷⁵ S. Webb, *English Progress Towards Social Democracy* (London: The Fabian Society, 1893), 4.

of collectivist measures.²⁷⁶ The municipalisation of public utilities and the rise of trusts were leading examples of these measures.²⁷⁷ The dominant political parties were also unconsciously adopting policies that were tending towards the establishment of socialism. In parallel to these industrial developments, political evolution, as exemplified most pertinently by the growth of democracy, was also paving the way for the adoption of socialism. The myriad of social problems that affected the working classes in the heyday of individualism were now being remedied by 'socialistic' reforms and legislation that reflected the 'inevitable result of the advent of political democracy'.²⁷⁸ This was because the power to initiate reforms 'was now passing rapidly into the hands of those who themselves directly suffer from the evils to be removed'.²⁷⁹

These political and economic developments accelerating the growth of socialism had emerged in the wake of the Industrial and French Revolutions; the crucibles of the modern factory system and political democracy. Modern socialism was 'a stage in the evolution of society which could not arrive till the conditions necessary to it has been established'.²⁸⁰ Modern socialists used this historicist framework to differentiate their creed from earlier utopian forms of socialism. Ramsay MacDonald declared that 'the utopians did not appreciate that man's habits, modes of action and motives are acquired from the historical period in which he lives'.²⁸¹ Socialism was both the product of a specific historical epoch and the next, inevitable stage in the evolution of society. Utopian socialists had operated in ignorance of the evolutionary laws that governed social life and had attempted to impose their theories upon

²⁷⁶ Webb, *Historic Basis*, 47-50.

²⁷⁷ Webb, *Historic Basis*, 50-53.

²⁷⁸ Sidney Webb, 'The Difficulties of Individualism', in S. Webb, B. Shaw, S. Ball & O. Lodge (aut), *Socialism and Individualism* (New York: John Lane Company, 1911), 9.

²⁷⁹ Webb, 'The Difficulties of Individualism', 9.

²⁸⁰ T. Kirkup, *A History of Socialism* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909), 17.

²⁸¹ J.R. MacDonald, *Socialism and Society* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1908), 82.

social organisations that were insufficiently developed. Webb spelt out the obsolescence of these earlier forms of socialism to modern conditions by 'declaring that we must rid ourselves resolutely of these schemes and projects of bye-gone socialisms which have now passed out of date'.²⁸² They constituted a form 'of spurious collectivism' and 'making' for 'reaction' rather than 'social progress'.²⁸³ Anti-socialist 'homilies' referencing the failure of small-scale Fourierist communities such as Brook Farm and Icaria in nineteenth century America were symbolic of an historical irrelevance.²⁸⁴

These theoretical observations were utilised and deployed by socialists to contest accusations that they were merely recycling disproven theories redolent of past experiments. At a 1907 debate in Hammersmith town hall, William Bull, the Conservative MP for the area and a leading figure within the Anti-Socialist Union, directly challenged Philip Snowden by using several historical examples to demonstrate why socialist theories had always been a failure when applied practically. The decline of Athens could be attributed the socialist belief that the 'lower classes' should be relieved from taxation. Its concept of making the 'poor pay less' created a pauperised population that was ultimately unable to stem the decline of the Roman Empire.²⁸⁵ Snowden countered these assertions by declaring that 'there was absolutely no connection between modern socialism and whatever had happened in Rome...and Athens'.²⁸⁶ Socialism was a consequence of the industrial and political developments of the last century and a half. The need for socialism arose from the realities of economic evolution, and Snowden cited prior historical changes, such as the transition from slavery to feudalism, as having

²⁸² S. Webb, *Socialism: True and False* (London: Fabian Society, 1894), 10.

²⁸³ Webb, *Socialism*, 10.

²⁸⁴ Webb, 'Historic', 32.

²⁸⁵ P. Snowden, *Debate on socialism at Hammersmith Town Hall, 22nd November 1907* (Manchester: The Pioneer Press, 1907), 11.

²⁸⁶ Snowden, *Debate*, 15.

emanated from alterations in the methods of producing wealth.²⁸⁷ Ramsay MacDonald espoused similar views in a 1908 debate with John Strachey. Declaring himself a student of evolutionary theory and echoing the influence of Henry Maine and Herbert Spencer, Strachey argued that socialism belonged not to the future but to the past and cited specifically the examples of the middle ages and savage tribe societies.²⁸⁸ Human society had gradually escaped from the clutches of socialism but was now witnessing a retrogressive degeneration, 'as happens in all forms of evolution', as proposals for state intervention were gaining precedence in the economic and political spheres of society.²⁸⁹ MacDonald responded by declaring that 'I am surprised that a man of the historical mind of my opponent should go digging back into ancient history'.²⁹⁰ Socialists were concerned with the conditions 'which have arisen in our present state'.²⁹¹ The case against socialism could not be proven by referring to previous historical examples. Every serious student of evolutionary theory knew that it 'was not possible to jump into socialism all at once'.²⁹² Strachey was accused of misunderstanding the evolutionary process through which socialism would be established. Rather than an atavistic relapse, the growing adoption of collectivist measures by society, governing authorities and political parties demonstrated that the present trend of experience was progressing 'in the direction of socialism'.²⁹³

Socialists attacked opponents for wilfully distorting and mischaracterising historical events for their own political ends. They stridently challenged accusations that they were merely repeating the mistakes of the Parisian national workshops in the mid-nineteenth

²⁸⁷ Snowden, *Debate*, 15.

²⁸⁸ Haslemere Independent Labour Party, *Debate on Socialism* (Haslemere: Haslemere Independent Labour Party, 1908), 12.

²⁸⁹ Haslemere *Debate*, 12.

²⁹⁰ Haslemere, *Debate*, 19.

²⁹¹ Haslemere, *Debate*, 19.

²⁹² Haslemere, *Debate*, 19.

²⁹³ Haslemere, *Debate*, 10.

century. In his 1911 work *The Socialist Movement*, Ramsay MacDonald called attention to the ‘oft exposed error of attributing the collapse of these workshops to Louis Blanc and his socialist allies’.²⁹⁴ The workshops had, in fact, been instituted by moderate republicans fearful of socialism and were deliberately designed with the manifest aim of destroying the credibility of the right to work. MacDonald’s analysis prominently invoked the authority of Thomas Kirkup, the first English historian of socialism and the author responsible for defining the term in the 1887 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.²⁹⁵ Kirkup asserted in his influential work *A History of Socialism* that the national workshops represented a travesty of the proposals of Louis Blanc, established expressly to discredit them.²⁹⁶ Whereas Blanc envisioned a future society organised around the principles of the right to work and co-operative production, the national workshops offered nothing but unproductive labour and it was intended that labourers employed under their remit would be ready to assist the republican government ‘in the event of a struggle with the socialist party.’²⁹⁷

Kirkup, a sympathetic observer of socialism along ‘lines very close to advanced liberal thought’, was here reiterating an argument current in continental socialist circles since at least the mid-nineteenth century.²⁹⁸ The *Social Democrat*, the newspaper of the Social Democratic Federation, referred to this lineage in 1906 when it printed an article written by the German labour leader Ferdinand Lassalle nearly fifty years earlier in direct response to ‘the gross misrepresentation of the experiment of “48” by leading contemporary liberal politicians like John Morley.’²⁹⁹ In the article, Lassalle condemned the popular assumption that the national

²⁹⁴ MacDonald, *The*, 164.

²⁹⁵ Collini mentions this definition in *Liberalism and Sociology*. See Collini, *Liberalism*, 34.

²⁹⁶ Kirkup, *A History*, 49.

²⁹⁷ Kirkup, *A History*, 49.

²⁹⁸ The phrase ‘advanced liberal thought’ comes from Freedon, *New Liberalism*, f. 3, 26.

²⁹⁹ F. Lassalle, ‘The French National Workshops of 1848’.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lassalle/1906/04/workshops-1848.htm> [accessed 27 July 2018].

workshops were organised according to the principles of Louis Blanc.³⁰⁰ Vehement opponents of socialism active in the provisional government established after the February abdication of the monarch, Louis Philippe, had offered relief work to the unemployed as a means of creating 'a paid working class army devoted to the moderate republication majority'.³⁰¹ Lassalle cited the contemporaneous accounts of Emile Thomas, the official tasked with the organisation and maintenance of the workshops and, Augustine de Lamartine, the minister for foreign affairs in the provisional government, to underpin this argument. He specifically quoted in detail a conversation between Emile Thomas and the minister for public works, Pierre Marie de Saint-Georges, where the latter had stated that the workshops had been allowed to fail.³⁰² This, the scheming Saint-Georges believed, would demonstrate the 'falsity' and 'hollowness' of the theory of the right to work.³⁰³ Ernest Belfort Bax, writing in a February 1906 article in *Justice*, also espoused a similar line of analysis, referencing Emile Thomas' *History of the National Workshops* to counteract the 'stale falsehoods' uttered by John Morley.³⁰⁴ Thomas, described by Bax as a 'violent political enemy of socialistic ideas', intimated that the whole business of organising the workshops had been done for the 'express purpose of failure in order to discredit such schemes once and for all'.³⁰⁵ Bax questioned how a man such as John Morley, a man who had written volumes on Voltaire, Diderot and Robespierre, could seemingly be so deplorably ignorant of modern French history. Seeking to convince an audience of an exploded old fallacy, Morley was guilty of 'deliberate misrepresentation'.³⁰⁶

Less polemical accounts of the national workshops in late Victorian and Edwardian

³⁰⁰ Ferdinand Lassalle, 'The French National Workshops of 1848'.

³⁰¹ Ferdinand Lassalle, 'The French National Workshops of 1848'.

³⁰² E.B. Bax, 'Mr Morley and the "National Workshops" of '48'.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1906/02/natworkshops.htm> [accessed 23 July 2018]

³⁰³ E.B. Bax, 'Mr Morley and the "National Workshops" of '48'.

³⁰⁴ E.B. Bax, 'Mr Morley and the "National Workshops" of '48'.

³⁰⁵ E.B. Bax, 'Mr Morley and the "National Workshops" of '48'.

³⁰⁶ E.B. Bax, 'Mr Morley and the "National Workshops" of '48'.

Britain bolstered the socialist claim that their dissolution could not be ascribed to the application of the right to work principle. An 1893 Board of Trade report investigating the issue of unemployment stated that the ‘most cursory examination of the evidence’ demonstrated that it was impossible to ‘judge correctly of the “Ateliers Nationaux” on the supposition that they were merely a bone fide effort to carry out the decree establishing the right to work’.³⁰⁷ The industrial and political crisis engulfing Paris at the time, the related necessity of relieving distress for large sections of the populace, the concerted infighting between different sections of the provisional government were all factors which hampered ‘the execution of any carefully planned scheme’.³⁰⁸ The German liberal, Karl Blind, a participant in the Frankfurt parliament of 1848 and later exiled to Britain on account of his political activities, challenged the historical arguments of anti-socialists in a 1906 article penned in the periodical *The Nineteenth Century*.³⁰⁹ He remarked that the national workshops were in no way a socialist experiment and had petered out at the behest of their political adversaries.³¹⁰ A personal acquaintance of Blanc, though not sharing his views on political economy, Blind argued that the national workshops were corrupted by the machinations of Bonapartist and royalist elements.³¹¹

The socialist response to historical attacks was never merely reactive as they regularly disputed claims that their creed was confiscatory. They deployed an offensive form of rhetoric that linked the Conservative Party with the historical interests of the landowning classes. The celebration of the history of pre-enclosure England was a central part of this wider socialist critique. H.M. Hyndman specifically cited the fifteenth century as an example of a period

³⁰⁷ Board of Trade Labour Department, *Report on Agencies and Methods for Dealing with the Unemployed*, 1893, Part V-Historical Examples, (ii.) The “Paris National Works” of 1848, 373.

³⁰⁸ Board of Trade, The “Paris National Works” of 1848, 373.

³⁰⁹ K. Blind, ‘The Paris National Workshops of 1848’, *The Nineteenth Century and After*, (August 1906)

³¹⁰ Blind, ‘The Paris National’, 308.

³¹¹ Blind, ‘The Paris National’, 312.

where people 'lived in perfect freedom, owned plots for themselves, and shared in the enormous common land which then lay free and open to all'.³¹² William Morris identified the labourers and craftsmen of fourteenth century England as the envy of Europe. They were entitled to rights of pasture over large tracts of common land, and could also own private pieces of land 'which they could occupy and till' to their own satisfaction'.³¹³ The land had since 'been robbed from their descendants by the meanness of a usurping class who made laws in their favour to sanctify pillage'.³¹⁴ Although temporally non-specific, Robert Blatchford's vision of a 'Merrie England' lay in a pastoral, rural idyll where the common people had free access to the fruits of the land.³¹⁵ These constructions of historical memory overlapped considerably with radical-liberal traditions that glorified portrayals of pre-enclosure England. As pointed out in the important work of Readman, Liberal-Radical discourse drew upon romanticised visions of the early-modern English countryside where democratic, village communities possessed free and unfettered access to the land.³¹⁶ Popular access to the soil, either by way of common rights or peasant proprietorship's, fostered a vigorous community life. These rights of access were revoked by a landlord class that managed 'to get into their hands the makings of the laws'.³¹⁷ The landlord class, emboldened by their grip on the levers of government and legislation, passed a series of Enclosure Acts that dispossessed the land from the people. This historical narrative still possessed considerable populist appeal in a late nineteenth and early twentieth century context where the enclosure of common land was still occurring.³¹⁸ It also

³¹² H.M. Hyndman, 'England for All', <https://www.marxists.org/archive/hyndman/1881/england/chap01.html> [accessed 24 May 2016]

³¹³ W. Morris, H.M. Hyndman, 'A Summary of the Principles of Socialism', <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/principles/principles.xml.htm> [24 May 2016]

³¹⁴ W. Morris, H.M. Hyndman, 'A Summary of the Principles of Socialism'.

³¹⁵ R. Blatchford, *Merrie England* (London: Clarion Office, 1894).

³¹⁶ P. Readman, *Land and Nation: Patriotism, National Identity, and the Politics of Land, 1880-1914* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2008), 142.

³¹⁷ Quoted in Readman, *Land and Nation*, 143.

³¹⁸ Readman, *Land and Nation*, 145.

served as important ammunition for rhetorical assaults on the Conservative Party, who were portrayed as the modern-day descendants of the landowners, during the Liberal Land Campaigns of the Edwardian period.³¹⁹

This narrative of dispossession had a long and distinguished lineage in English political culture. The Norman Yoke, which claimed that William the Conqueror had stolen the land from the English people in 1066, was perhaps its most famous manifestation.³²⁰ The inheritance of the Norman Yoke played a key role in radical arguments until the end of the nineteenth century. It was particularly important as a support for radical polemics that portrayed the landowning classes as the modern descendants of the Norman usurpers. The contemporary effects of the Norman Yoke were still being invoked by socialists like Blatchford in the late nineteenth century. The land was 'stolen property' that had passed through the hands of successive generations of aristocrats, from 'Norman barons' up to the present day.³²¹ However, as pointed out by Paul Ward, the Norman Yoke did not attract sustained attention from most socialists because they generally located the uprooting of the people from the land in later periods.³²² Hyndman and Morris situated this process in the sixteenth century where the growing commercial power of the landlords and the large farmers, who 'regarded the land only as a means of making gain', coerced people to leave the land.³²³ This early onset of capitalistic economic pressures forced labourers and craftsmen to abandon their self-sufficient methods of production and move into urban centres where they worked under the terms of wage slavery. Although supportive of the Norman Yoke inheritance, Blatchford identified the

³¹⁹ Readman, *Land and Nation*, 150-154.

³²⁰ McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 1998), 59-60.

³²¹ Blatchford, *Merrie*, 60.

³²² P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1998); 24-25.

³²³ W. Morris, H.M. Hyndman, 'A Summary of the Principles of Socialism'.

eighteenth century as having borne witness to the robbery of the land by 'big landowners'.³²⁴ 'Within a space of eighty years, no less than seven million acres were enclosed'.³²⁵ Blatchford used this historical example to dispute Conservative claims that socialism was a doctrine of plunder and confiscation. The true robbers were those who had stolen the land from the English people in the eighteenth century.

These historical analyses were prominently utilised in political meetings and public debates. Ramsay MacDonald used the platform of the chairman's address at the 1907 annual conference of the Independent Labour Party to denounce accusations by Lord Rosebery that the Labour Party's programme was one 'of confiscation'.³²⁶ MacDonald pointed out the hypocritical nature of Rosebery's claims by declaring that the landowning classes were the true expropriators of property. They had 'stolen the commons' and restricted 'rights of access to mountains and rivers'.³²⁷ The landowners had seized the land from the people without compensation and their descendants, in the form of politicians like Lord Rosebery, were still reaping the rewards. 'If they are rich today it is because they have violated every moral canon of property'.³²⁸ MacDonald ended his speech with a sarcastic rebuke satirising the claims of Rosebery. 'Oh, how one regrets that such moral principles regarding property were not preached and practised by Lord Rosebery's kind a century or so ago'.³²⁹

In December 1907 the Conservative politician H.O. Arnold Foster wrote a series of articles in the London *Evening Standard* decrying the growth of the socialist movement. The articles were simultaneously syndicated in provincial publications like the *Manchester Courier*

³²⁴ Blatchford, *Merrie*, 61.

³²⁵ Blatchford, *Merrie*, 61.

³²⁶ Independent Labour Party, *Report of the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the ILP held in The Temperance Hall, Derby. April 2nd and 3rd, 1907* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1907), 35.

³²⁷ Independent Labour Party, *Report*, 35.

³²⁸ Independent Labour Party, *Report*, 35.

³²⁹ Independent Labour Party, *Report*, 35.

and *Lancashire General Advertiser*, the *Western Post*, and the *Dundee Courier* and would eventually constitute the content of Forster's aforementioned 1908 book *English Socialism of Today*. It was the publication of one of these articles in the *Dundee Courier* that aroused the attention of Ramsay MacDonald. The article, entitled 'The Socialist Programme', attacked socialism for seeking to 'confiscate people's property's against their will'.³³⁰ This aim was portrayed as a central motivation for socialist movements throughout history. MacDonald responded to this charge at a labour meeting in Dundee by claiming that 'socialism did not want to confiscate'.³³¹ Forster had seemingly forgotten the history of his own party and its links with a landlord class that had built up its 'possessions, by a series of acts of parliament, including the commons enclosures acts, which was sheer confiscation, for they never gave anyone a farthing'.³³² The methods employed by the Conservative Party's predecessors to acquire property would not be repeated by socialists 'when they came into office'.³³³

This defence of socialism was also prevalent in debates surrounding the terms of the People's Budget. At a House of Commons debate in May 1909, Philip Snowden criticised an earlier claim by Arthur Balfour that the principles of the Budget were exactly the same as the ones espoused by the American land reformer Henry George. George's proposals, in the eyes of Balfour, were confiscatory because they sought 'to take the land from the landowner'.³³⁴ This was an argument that Snowden wholly disputed; George had never made pronouncements in favour of expropriating private property. He was a stern opponent of land nationalisation, advocating instead for the public ownership of the economic rent of the land. The

³³⁰'The Socialist Programme', *Dundee Courier*, 5 Dec. 1907.

³³¹'Defence of Socialism: Reply to Arnold Forster', *Dundee Courier*, 7 Dec. 1907.

³³²'Defence of Socialism: Reply to Arnold Forster'.

³³³'Defence of Socialism: Reply to Arnold Forster'.

³³⁴ HC Deb 05 May 1909, vol 4, cc 1081.

https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1909/may/05/tea#S5CV0004P0_19090505_HOC_269 [accessed 25 February 2016].

history of the English land system demonstrated that the landowning classes were the true expropriators. They had stolen 'the land from the people'.³³⁵ In service of this point, Snowden implored Balfour to 'take a study in the history of English land' and examine the process by which his own family had become possessed of their estates.³³⁶ The First Earl of Salisbury, Robert Cecil, the original patriarch of the Cecil family, had procured large swathes of land in the Elizabethan period. Cecil's acquisition of land in Liverpool in the late sixteenth century was still 'bringing the family probably tens of thousands of pounds a year, as a result of the great tribute they are able to levy on the industry of that great city'.³³⁷

A 1909 pamphlet by the influential Independent Labour Party politician William C. Anderson explicitly criticised attempts by the Anti-Budget League to label the budget's land taxes as expropriatory. Anderson directly targeted the presence of numerous dukes in the membership of the league. The family history of the Duke of Rutland, also a prominent member of the Anti-Socialist Union, was singled out for particular scorn. The fortunes of the Rutland family were inextricably linked to the 'to theft of church lands and the enclosure of common lands' during the reign of Henry VIII.³³⁸ The family of the Duke of Portland was attacked through reference to the reign of William III in the seventeenth century. The Duke's ancestors had 'wheeled large slice of crown land and churches from the monarch'.³³⁹ Subsequent dukes had continued this process of appropriation by inventing 'the most ingenious methods of levying tolls on the community'.³⁴⁰

³³⁵ HC Deb 05 May 1909, vol 4, cc 1081.

³³⁶ HC Deb 05 May 1909, vol 4, cc 1081.

³³⁷ HC Deb 05 May 1909, vol 4, cc 1082.

³³⁸ W.C. Anderson, *Socialism, The Dukes and the Land* (London: Independent Labour Party Publication Department, 1909), 7.

³³⁹ Anderson, *Socialism*, 6.

³⁴⁰ Anderson, *Socialism*, 6.

V

This chapter has demonstrated the prominence of history to the perspective of Edwardian anti-socialists. Claims that socialists were merely reiterating the mistakes of past events and experiments provided a sense of reassurance for political adversaries. Socialist ideology imparted to its activists a sense that capitalism would ultimately be overthrown in favour of a society that planned production for use, emphasised cooperation over competition, and jettisoned gross inequalities of wealth and inherited privilege. The record of history necessitated this next, sequential step towards a socialist form of social organisation. Anti-Socialists possessed no such certainties and their use of history was less conceptually precise, aside from the minority view of the Individualists, often relying on randomly chosen examples that could not be plausibly construed as proving the folly of contemporary socialist theories. Nevertheless, despite its lack of analytical rigour, this historical form of argumentation featured prominently in public politics, scholarly debates and parliamentary speeches. When addressing large public meetings and fetes, Edwardian Conservatives commonly drew on historical analogies comparing the actions of new liberals and socialists with those of the French Jacobins. Liberals and Conservatives still loyal to the doctrines of the limited state and the self-correcting market criticised the Labour Party's 'Right to Work' bill through reference to the flawed principles that ultimately doomed the experiment of the National Workshops in 1848. Socialists, too, met these challenges head on and portrayed Conservatives as the true expropriators, their landed ascendants having robbed the land from the people in previous centuries.

Chapter Two: 'Saving the Minds of the Young': The Campaign against the Socialist and Proletarian Sunday Schools, 1907-1927

In the latter stages of Herman 'Sapper' McNeile's 1922 thriller *The Black Gang*, the second novel in the author's hugely successful 'Bulldog Drummond' series, the titular no-nonsense detective is brought face to face with a group of Bolshevik conspirators' intent on overthrowing the British government.¹ Two of the plotters, a Russian named Yulowski and an unnamed Englishman who rather misleadingly 'looked like an ordinary middle-class' professional, engage in a discussion about the dangers of socialist Sunday schools and their important contribution to the cause of international revolutionary subversion. The mild-mannered Englishman states that the schools had started twenty-five years previously and were teaching their youthful attendees to hate organised religion and the capitalist class. The impressionable minds of the next generation, he went on to claim, could be moulded like plastic clay, in stark contrast to the stubbornness of adults 'who were so often set in a groove' and comfortable in their own ways.

Writing in the same year as McNeile, John Buchan, the Scottish crime novelist and Conservative politician, explicitly referenced the menace of the socialist Sunday school movement, albeit in a rather light-hearted manner as an object of mockery in his popular novel *Huntingtower*.² The book's protagonist, Dickson McCunn, a retired greengrocer and representing a rather stereotyped depiction of a typical lower-middle class supporter of the interwar Conservative Party, forms an unlikely friendship with the members of a Glaswegian

¹ H.C. McNeile, *The Black Gang* (New York: George H. Doran, 1922), 233-235.

² J. Buchan, *Huntingtower* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), 198.

street gang named the Gorbals Die-Hards. Dougal McCrombie, the leader of the Die-Hards, talks about the experience of another member of his gang who had previously attended a socialist school on a whim. Speaking in his distinctive inner-city Glaswegian accent, McCrombie notes that the socialist teachers had told his companion 'to jine a thing called an International' but these promptings came to no avail as 'Jaikie thought it was a fitba' club'.

The Socialist Sunday schools, and their later proletarian offshoots, occupied a particularly odious place in the pantheon of right-wing adversaries in the early twentieth century. Masquerading under the guise of religious Sunday schools and deliberately targeting one of the most vulnerable groups in society, these subversive educational institutions espoused the vengeful doctrines of class hatred, revolution and atheism. It was widely believed by many conservatives that their political enemies had made a concerted point of 'permeating the young with their anti-social and class war' beliefs.³ Pre-empting the efforts of patriotic conservatives, the left had recognised that its future success depended entirely upon the education of the present generation. The widespread dissemination and persistent promulgation of such teaching, if left unopposed, threatened to undermine the vitality of the body politic and the very basis of constitutional government. Speaking at a gathering of the Primrose League's Junior Section in 1924, William Joynson-Hicks, the sitting Conservative home secretary, warned that the Labour Party was 'out to corrupt the minds of the young, to destroy at an early age in their mind those great vital principles of which the Conservative Party and the Primrose League stood'.⁴

The foreboding tone of such rhetoric reflected real and deeply-held anxieties about

³ 'Save the Children', *Primrose League Gazette*, September 1922.

⁴ 'Joynson-Hicks at the Annual Gathering of the Junior Branch', *Primrose League Gazette*, Jun. 1924.

the influence of the socialist movement in British politics and society, and was further inflamed by the emergence of a worldwide communist threat after the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917. In the 1920s, Conservatives often depicted the socialist and proletarian Sunday schools as willing indigenous agents of Bolshevik conspiracy. At a meeting of the Junior Imperial League in 1927, Lord Birkenhead, the Tory diehard and cabinet minister, made it clear that the schools 'took their orders from a foreign nation' and openly derided the nation's 'high and proud traditions'.⁵ These fears prompted Conservatives to form their own distinctive youth movements. Groups such as the Primrose Juniors, the Junior Imperial League and the Young Britons utilised social activities like plays, pageants, history lessons, songs and sports competitions to instil in children and teenagers alike the fundamental righteousness of conservative principles.⁶ Loyalty to one's country and a committed faith in the benevolence of religion, empire and monarchy were envisioned as core values deliberately counteracting the subversive and atheistic teachings conducted in socialist and communist schools. These conservative youth initiatives never seriously rivalled the enormous popularity of the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides, with their combined memberships exceeding one million by 1930 and who in any case espoused values that were broadly complementary to the Conservative ethos, but did constitute the largest political organisations for young people in Britain between the wars.⁷ In his study of popular conservative organisations during the interwar

⁵ 'Junior Imperial League Conference', *The Imp*, Jun. 1927.

⁶ For these groups see N.R. McCrillis, *The British Conservative Party in the Age of Universal Suffrage 1918-1929* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1998), 83-110.

⁷ For a flavour of the scholarship on the Scouts and Guides see J.O. Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940* (London: Croom Helm, 1977): 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in relation to British Youth Movements', *International Review of Social History*, 16 (1971), 125-158; 'Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement Before 1920: Citizen Training or Soldiers of the Future?', *English Historical Review*, 102 (1987), 934-942; M. Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (Pantheon Books: New York, 1986); P. Wilkinson, 'English Youth Movements, 1908-1930', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4 (1969), 3-23; A. Warren, 'Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides and an Imperial Ideal', in J.M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 232-256; 'Sir Robert Baden-Powell, The Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920',

period, Neal McCrillis notes that by 1929 there were about 2,000 branches of the Junior Imperial League and between 200,000 and 300,000 members while the Young Britons in the same year had 470 branches and 49,000 members.⁸

Were these apprehensions proportionate to the size and influence of the socialist and proletarian schools? The short answer to this question is no. Neither attracted mass memberships. A January 1911 census measuring daily attendances on the twenty-ninth day of the month found that there were 5,584 students attending a total of 86 socialist Sunday schools nationwide, with particular strengths in the Glasgow, Lancashire and Yorkshire areas.⁹ In the early 1920s, a further national census recorded 6,210 child and 1,932 adult attendees and a total of 140 schools.¹⁰ The figures for the more radical proletarian schools are harder to come by as they were formally brought under the banner of the wider Communist children's movement in 1922, which included groups like the Young Comrades League whose motive force was to provide future activists for the Communist Party of Great Britain.¹¹ In 1929, the Young Comrades League reported that there were 500 communist children and eighteen dedicated youth sections nationwide.¹²

Did the ideology of the socialist and proletarian schools resonate with the attacks of the right? Socialist education was non-theological and did not subscribe to orthodox Christian

English Historical Review, 101 (1986), 376-398; T.M. Proctor, *Scouting for Girls: A Century of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009); for the figure cited above see T.M. Proctor, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002), 33.

⁸ McCrillis, *The British*, 83.

⁹ 'Census of School Attendances on 29th January, 1911', *Young Socialist*, Mar. 1911; Out of the total figure, 3,240 had attended schools in Glasgow, Lancashire and Yorkshire.

¹⁰ J. Gerrard, *Radical Childhoods: Schooling and the Struggle for Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 55.

¹¹ Gerrard, *Radical*, 86.

¹² T. Linehan, *Communism in Britain, 1920-39: From the Cradle to the Grave* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 35.

tenets but could hardly be described as atheistic, readily appropriating the phraseology, naming rituals and culture of traditional Sunday schools.¹³ Its pedagogical ethos and resultant curriculum was broadly moral and ethical in tone, imparting upon children the importance of values like love, justice and charity and their fundamental necessity to the future establishment of the socialist commonwealth. For Fred Coates, a teacher based in Lancashire, the socialist educator aimed to develop the mental and moral capabilities of children, a didactic strategy that was comparable to ‘a great religious faculty’.¹⁴ The essential difference between socialist and religious education lay in their differing end goals. While religious instructors preached salvation through Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross, socialists believed that human life would only be free of want and squalor when society organised ‘the production and distribution of wealth for the whole people instead of letting the present employers do it for their own private gain’.¹⁵ This explicitly political and secular end goal was certainly an object of concern for those struggling to assert the value of religion in an early twentieth century context where materialism and unbelief appeared to be the ascendant forces in society.

Right-wing attacks were on more fertile ground when directed towards the teachings and educational philosophy of the proletarian schools. Founded by the Glaswegian militant

¹³ The scholarship on the school movement has generally tended to see them as expressions of the ‘religion of socialism’; see F. Reid, ‘Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain, 1892-1939’, *International Review of Social History*, 11 (1966), 18-47; H. Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party, 1880-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 116-118; for the schools in early twentieth century London see P. Thompson, *Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London, 1885-1914* (London: Routledge, 1967); 38; T. Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2-3, 114-115; Jessica Gerrard’s recent work on the movement has stressed its diversity and concern with a wider range of educational and political issues; See Gerrard, *Radical Childhoods*, 43-70; ‘Little Soldiers for Socialism: Childhood and Socialist Politics in the British Socialist Sunday School Movement’, *International Institute for Social History*, (2013), 71-96; for the ‘religion of socialism’ see S. Yeo, ‘A New Life: the Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896’, *History Workshop Journal*, 4 (1977), 5-56; S. Pierson, *British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 358; M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 278-297.

¹⁴ ‘Lancashire and Cheshire Union’, *Young Socialist*, July 1907.

¹⁵ ‘Why we call Ourselves Socialists’, *Young Socialist*, April 1907.

Tom Anderson in 1911 and initially part of the wider socialist school movement, the proletarian schools split from their parent body in 1922 and became formally affiliated with the Communist Party of Great Britain.¹⁶ Deeply critical of the ‘abstract teaching of “Love and Justice” in socialist schools, proletarian teachers taught children the basic of the class struggle and encouraged them to work for the cause of international communist revolution.¹⁷ One pamphlet written by Tom Anderson entitled ‘Athenion the Slave King’ exhorted pupils to identify with the story of a humble Sicilian serf who led an uprising against the Roman Republic in the second century BC.¹⁸ Athenion’s betrayal at the hands of fellow slave leader Salvius, ‘who bound him in chains and put him in prison’, was comparable to modern circumstances where parliamentary socialists had betrayed the revolutionary cause. Anderson specifically blamed ‘the moderate socialist’ for the ‘shooting of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg’ during the Spartacist uprising of 1919. Communists believed that the site of the school was the analogue of what the factory floor was to adult activists, namely the ‘locale where the class struggle’ was at its most ferocious and the place where the prospective revolutionary movement could take root.¹⁹

Despite their small size and limited penetration into the fabric of British educational and political life, the existence and activities of the schools were seized upon by right-wing newspapers, pressure groups and religious organisations. Closely connected to the right-ward flank of the Conservative Party, this counter-movement constituted the driving force behind a campaign to suppress the influence of the socialist and proletarian schools in the first three

¹⁶ Linehan, *Communism*, 31.

¹⁷ Linehan, *Communism*, 31.

¹⁸ T. Anderson, *Athenion the Slave King: (103 B.C.) A Model Lesson For Proletarian Schools* (Glasgow: Proletarian Bookstall, 1922), 1-14.

¹⁹ Linehan, *Communism*, 31-32.

decades of the twentieth century.²⁰ Beginning in London in 1907 with the publication of a series of articles and letters in the *Daily Telegraph* disclosing the existence of socialist Sunday schools in the capital, the campaign consistently utilised scare tactics reminiscent of a ‘moral panic’.

How does the chapter make use of this concept? First used in a British context by Stanley Cohen, a sociologist whose 1972 book titled *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* detailed the media and public reaction to a series of scuffles between the Mods and Rockers subcultures on beachfronts along the southern English coast, moral panic has been incorporated into historical research by scholars interested in analysing hyperbolic public responses to threats that are grossly exaggerated and largely groundless.²¹ In a 1987 *Social History* article, Robert Sindall examined the London garrotting panics of 1856 and 1862 and deemed them to be creations of newspapers in the capital.²² Their crude reportage of street violence in London instigated ‘a short-lived panic by the middle classes’ who in turn pressurised the authorities ‘into enacting hasty and ill-thought-out legislation’.²³ John Springhall has traced the historical development of moral panics in Britain from the early nineteenth century to the late twentieth, foregrounding the role of the media and its ability to inflame public emotions about the degenerative effects of popular commercial entertainment targeting children.²⁴ Similarly, the essays in Sian Nicholas’s and Tom O Malley’s recent edited collection surveying the social

²⁰ The campaign was largely driven by right-wing pressure groups like the Anti-Socialist Union, the British Empire Union and the National Citizens’ Union. One group, the Children’s Social Sunday Union, was formed specifically to deal with threat of the schools in 1910. The London Municipal Reform Party, along with the *Daily Telegraph*, was active in the campaign in 1907.

²¹ S. Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1972).

²² R. Sindall, ‘The London Garrotting Panics of 1856 and 1862’, *Social History*, 12 (1987), 351-359.

²³ Sindall, ‘The London’, 351.

²⁴ J.O. Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830–1996* (New York, St Martin’s Press, 1998), 8.

fears generated by moral panics have also stressed the prominence of media forms in constructing controversies over issues like unmarried motherhood, the black market in the Second World War, and the cinema release of *A Clockwork Orange* in the 1970s.²⁵

Aspects of moral panic theory, as espoused classically by Cohen, are helpful in explaining and understanding the campaign against the socialist and proletarian Sunday schools. Cohen outlined a five-step process whereby a moral panic develops:

A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible.²⁶

The campaign certainly identified the schools as a deviant social threat, established a recognisable group at risk in the form of children, greatly overstated their significance and reach, simplified their teachings to the point of caricature, called for firm action to be taken on the part of authorities, but did not really succeed in provoking the fervour of public opinion. The campaign was largely the creation of political interests intent on achieving partisan ends; the *Telegraph* series in 1907 was part of a wider ploy to slander the London

²⁵ E. Colpus, 'Unmarried: Unmarried Motherhood in Post-First World War British Film', in S. Nicholas & T. O'Malley (eds.), *Moral Panics, Social Fears, and the Media: Historical Perspectives* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2013), 129-147; S. Nicholas, 'Fifth Columnists, Collaborators and Black Marketeers: Fearing the 'Enemy Within' in the Wartime British Media', in Nicholas & O' Malley (eds.), *Moral Panics*, 162-177; P. Kramer, 'The Ugly Tide of Today's Teenage Violence': Revisiting the *Clockwork Orange* Controversy in the UK', in Nicholas & O' Malley (eds.), *Moral Panics*, 210-231.

²⁶ Cohen, *Folk*, 9.

Progressives by association with socialism while radical right groups such as the British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union in the 1920s deliberately sought to stir up fears about the hidden dangers of the schools, primarily as a means to promote their own anti-socialist agenda. Cohen's theory, which is also the case with the historians cited above, accords a central role to media forces in creating the conditions for a moral panic to emerge.²⁷ This facet of Cohen's theoretical framework does not accurately capture the character of the campaign in the 1920s when it was driven at the behest of the National Citizens' Union and the British Empire Union. These groups created and defined the nature of the threat and constituted the forces calling for official action on the issue, and appeared to have operated largely independently of press interests. The theory of moral panic is useful up to a point in relation to the campaign but will not be adopted here as a strict analytical framework. Rather, the chapter uses moral panic as a helpful theoretical tool for discerning and explaining the inordinate amount of attention the political right paid to the schools in the early twentieth century.

What does this campaign tell us about the wider political culture of anti-socialism? Firstly, it demonstrates the centrality of fear to the worldview of anti-socialism. Conservatives successfully utilised scare tactics during key flashpoints like the general election of 1924, capitalising on the publication of the forged Zinoviev letter to portray their political foes in the Labour Party as dupes of Bolshevik Russia, 'trafficking with the nation's enemies' as one *Daily Mail* headline put it.²⁸ Red Scares were far from an innovation of interwar politics and had been pioneered in the Edwardian period by Conservatives, Municipal Reformers and

²⁷ Cohen refers to the mass media as 'the important carrier and producer of moral panics'. See Cohen, *Folk*, 16.

²⁸ 'A Shocking Thing', *Daily Mail* (London), 28 Oct. 1924.

Individualists.²⁹ The campaign is an early example of a Red Scare and also a reminder of the important continuities that informed anti-socialist ideology and activism in the early twentieth century.

Secondly, the campaign confirms the validity of analyses that emphasise the distinctly local features of anti-socialism in the early twentieth century. The organisations that coordinated and sustained the campaign derived much of their strength from or were entirely based in London and southern England. The Municipal Reform Party and the Children's Social Sunday Union only operated within the confines of the metropolis, the activities of the Anti-Socialist Union and the British Empire Union centred on London, and the National Citizens' Union, formerly the Middle Class Union, was particularly strong in south eastern England.³⁰ David Thackeray's work has demonstrated how virulent anti-socialist discourses 'thrived in London and its environs' in the early decades of the twentieth century, pivoting largely around economic anxieties relating to rising government expenditure and increasing rates of taxation.³¹ The campaign also specialised in a reactionary and combative form of anti-socialism, denouncing socialists and communists for espousing doctrines that menaced Christian practice and the security of the state. The local dimension of the campaign can also be construed as a weakness; the socialist and proletarian schools were strongest in Glasgow

²⁹ The Conservative Party, the Primrose League and the Liberal Unionist Council, for example, inaugurated a national campaign against socialism in 1907, producing propaganda of an anti-socialist nature and sending speakers to industrial areas in the north. For this see J.N. Peters, 'Anti-Socialism in British Politics, 1900-1922', (PhD Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1992), 251; The Anti-Socialist Union also emerged during this period, holding its first meeting in 1908, and was largely the outcome of agitation by Conservatives, Individualists and representatives of the London Municipal Reform Party. For this see K.D. Brown, 'The Anti-Socialist Union, 1908-49', in K. D. Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1974), 239-241; F. Coetzee, *For Party or Country: Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Popular Conservatism in Edwardian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 100-102.

³⁰ For the London focus of the Anti-Socialist Union see Coetzee, *For Party*, 103; for the south-eastern basis of the Middle Class Union see Peters, 'Anti-Socialism', 312.

³¹ D. Thackeray, *Conservatism for the Democratic Age Conservative Cultures and the Challenges of Mass Politics in Early Twentieth Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 55-57, 156-160; quote from 156.

not the south of England. A 1909 *Times* article asserted that the Clyde district of the socialist Sunday movement 'was the largest single centre', accounting for nearly a third of the total attendees nationwide.³² The proletarian movement was founded in the Scottish industrial city and a 1922 Conservative year book noted that it advocated 'revolutionary socialism' from its 'headquarters in Glasgow'.³³ The misguided geographical focus of the campaign certainly stifled any aspiration to actually suppress the socialist and proletarian school movements.

Thirdly, the campaign illustrates the hitherto unexplored relationship between the radical right and the Church of England in the early twentieth century, in a further illustration of its southern English flavour.³⁴ Seeking the approval of the church for the campaign, the efforts of the radical right were largely rebuffed by the Anglican hierarchy and related church organisations. The Mothers' Union, a leading Anglican women's organisation, constituted the major anomaly in relation to this general trend. One of the biggest and most influential women's groups in early-twentieth century Britain, possessing a large national membership and an extensive network of branches, the Mothers' Union celebrated motherhood as a vocation, stressed the sanctity of home and family life, and opposed the liberalisation of divorce and abortion laws.³⁵ It responded favourably to the suggestions of the radical right and supported the campaign. Mothers' Union ideology was often quite explicit in its distaste for socialism, sharing ideological notable similarities with Conservative groups like the

³² 'The Socialist Movement in Great Britain', *The Times* (London), 16 Jan. 1909. 800 Glaswegian attendees out of an estimated national total of 2,600.

³³ Conservative and Unionist Central Office, *The Campaign Guide: the Unique Political Reference Book, 1922* (Westminster: Conservative and Unionist Central Office, 1922), 994.

³⁴ For the southern basis of Anglicanism in the twentieth century see R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 275-276.

³⁵ For the Mothers' Union see O. Parker, *For Family's Sake: A History of the Mothers' Union, 1876-1976* (Folkestone: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1975); C. Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation, 1876-2008* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009); C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); For the movement's origins in nineteenth century mothers' meetings see F. Prochaska, 'A Mother's Country: Mothers' Meetings and Family Welfare in Britain, 1850-1950', *History*, 74 (1989), 379-399.

Women's Unionist Organisation.³⁶ Exploring the relationships between these two organisations, the chapter argues that the Mothers' Union can be seen as a key supporter of Conservatism in civil society.

Related to this last point, the role of the Mothers' Union within the campaign also brings into view questions about the non-political stance of middle-class associational culture in the interwar period. Ross McKibbin argues that the non-partisan outlook of interwar middle-class associationalism harboured a concealed and indirect anti-socialist logic.³⁷ Focusing on male patterns of bourgeois sociability, he does not make clear whether female voluntary organisations with a middle-class membership also conformed to this model of depoliticised anti-socialism.³⁸ The evidence presented here is suggestive of a different interpretation, anti-socialist views in the Mothers' Union, while never entirely uncontroversial, were openly expressed and did not conform to McKibbin's model of 'apolitical sociability'.

The chapter is divided into the three sections. The first examines the beginning of the campaign from its genesis in London in 1907. The second section investigates the campaign between 1911 and 1914, when it was driven by groups like the Children's Social Sunday Union and the Anti-Socialist Union. The third section explores the course of the campaign from the early 1920s to 1927.

³⁶ On this similarity see C. Berthezene, 'The middlebrow and the making of a 'new common sense': women's voluntarism, Conservative politics and representations of womanhood', in C. Berthezene & J.V. Gottlieb (eds.), *Rethinking Right-Wing Women: Gender and the Conservative Party, 1880s to the present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 108.

³⁷ McKibbin, *Classes*, 96-98.

³⁸ He touches on female middle class associational life but not in relation to anti-socialism. See McKibbin, *Classes*, 88-89.

On February 27, 1907, a letter was published in the *Daily Telegraph* purportedly exposing the activities of socialist Sunday schools in London.³⁹ The letter revealed that a number of London County Council (LCC) classrooms were being used for the purposes of teaching children to be 'socialists' and 'unbelievers'. Employing the pseudonym 'A Woman Voter', the anonymous letter writer claimed to have witnessed at first hand a socialist lesson in an LCC classroom in Fulham three weeks previously. Children were described as greeting their instructors with the dictum that 'we are the builders because we are building a new world'. Songs such as the Internationale and the Red Flag were sung in place of Christian hymns. The centrepiece of the lesson revolved around the story of a young man who had recently discarded his commitment to the Liberal Party and organised religion in favour of socialism. Standing at the front of the classroom, the young socialist spoke of his former belief in Christianity 'which he now knew' was only a 'superstition'. The letter lamented that the general public were seemingly ignorant and unaware of what was taking place in certain LCC schools every Sunday and implored *Telegraph* readers to cast their vote against the Progressive party, which had approved 'socialist use of our rates', in the upcoming county council election. The identity of 'A Woman Voter' was later revealed in a subsequent letter published in the *Telegraph* three months later.⁴⁰ Claire Norriss, the future women's secretary of the Anti-Socialist Union, attested that 'she was the person who had the honour of bringing to public attention the teaching of socialism in LCC schools'.⁴¹ Norriss would later become a

³⁹ 'Socialists and Atheists in the Making', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 27 Feb. 1907.

⁴⁰ 'Letter', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 4 Apr. 1907.

⁴¹ Biographical details of Norriss are scant but a useful outline of her political activism can be found in a February 1917 *Times* article which also revealed she became women's secretary of the Anti-Socialist Union in 1909. See 'King's Bench Division', *The Times* (London), 16 Feb. 1917.

prominent activist in the campaign against socialist Sunday schools, a development that will be explored in more detail in a later part of the chapter.

The appearance of Norriss' first letter set in motion a concerted effort by the *Telegraph* to publicise the activities of the schools in the capital. On February 28, an article entitled 'Socialism in Schools' described the 'astonishing' growth of the schools in working class districts across London.⁴² The 'socialist gospel' was being openly preached in areas such as Edmonton, Hammersmith, Islington and Kingston. In inner-city Poplar and suburban Walthamstow, both areas with large working-class populations, 'two Sunday schools were run each week'. Socialists, warned the article, specifically targeted the use of council schools as children were accustomed to attending them during the week. By conducting lessons in LCC classrooms, socialists gave their propaganda a 'weight and an influence not to be secured in strange surroundings'.

A letter printed on the same day by T. Wakelin Saint, an alderman for Islington council and prominent Municipal Reform leader within the borough, remarked that it was high time the London public knew what purposes the 'progressive-socialist' party was allowing rate-supported schools to be used.⁴³ A further article and two letters appeared four days later on March 1st attacking the bitter class hatred of the 'red catechism', the related acquiescence of the Progressive council and the Free Church Council movement in facilitating socialist Sunday school activity, and drew attention to a recent incident where a vicar was unable to rent out an LCC classroom for bible teaching purposes.⁴⁴ 'Within a week or so' of this incident, the

⁴² 'Socialism in Schools', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 28 Feb. 1907.

⁴³ 'Godless Commandments', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 28 Feb. 1907.

⁴⁴ 'Sunday Socialism in LCC Schools', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 1. Mar. 1907; 'Protect the Children', *The Daily Telegraph*, 1. Mar. 1907; 'A Vicar's Experience', *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 Mar. 1907.

‘same classroom’ was let out to a socialist Sunday school.⁴⁵

The timing of this press attention was highly significant and deliberate; coinciding with the London County Council election on March 2nd. The 1907 LCC election was undoubtedly the most famous and bitterly contested local election of the entire Edwardian period.⁴⁶ It pitted the profoundly anti-socialist Municipal Reform party, representative of the conservative interest in the capital and the Progressives, a diverse and broad alliance comprised of radicals, liberals and socialists who had controlled the council from its inception in 1889. Occurring in a propitious economic period where inflation was depressing property values and incomes, the election was dominated by the themes of financial misconduct, rising rates which disproportionately affected the working and lower middle classes, and municipal debt increases, owing largely to the Progressive administration’s implementation of expensive public projects like the works committee and the unremunerative Thames steamboat scheme.⁴⁷ Masterminding a powerful propaganda campaign, producing sixty-nine different leaflets and making use of varied mediums such as cartoons, posters, gramophones, motor cars and wagonettes, the municipal reformers repeatedly attacked the corruption and fiscal ineptitude of Progressivism, and consequently won the election in a landslide.⁴⁸ The victorious

⁴⁵ ‘A Vicar’s Experience’.

⁴⁶ Amidst a vast historiography see the following works K. Young, *Local Politics and the Rise of Party: The London Municipal Society and the Conservative Intervention in Local Elections 1894-1963* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1975), 93-97; P. Thompson, *Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London, 1885-1914* (London: Routledge, 1967), 179-183; S. Pennybacker, *A Vision for London, 1889-1914: Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 28-9; Avner Offer, *Property and Politics: Landownership, Law, Ideology and urban development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁴⁷ Offer, *Property*, 255, 283; Thompson, *Socialists*, 280; Young, *Local*, 93; S. Pennybacker, ‘The Millennium by return of post’ Reconsidering London Progressivism, 1889-1907’, in D. Feldman & G.S. Jones (eds.), *Metropolis: Histories and Representations Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1989), 150; Peters, ‘Anti-Socialism’, 192-210; Thackeray, *Conservatism*, 56.

⁴⁸ For the propaganda campaign and leaflet production see Young, *Local*, 93-95; for its varied forms of political communication J. Thompson ‘The Lights of the Electric Octopus Have Been Switched Off’: Visual and Political Culture in Edwardian London’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 29 (2017), 331-356.

party captured nearly two-thirds of all available seats on a record turnout of 55%.⁴⁹

The London right continually equated the meanings of the terms progressive and socialist as part of this successful propaganda strategy. Progressive ideology and practice, which took a sympathetic view of labour questions and sought to place essential utilities such as gas, water and electricity under municipal ownership was commonly portrayed as being analogous to socialism. The moniker 'progressive-socialist' was utilised by Municipal Reform cartoonists like E.P. Huskinson who provided visual and strikingly colourful depictions of the seemingly symbiotic nature of the relationship between progressivism and socialism.⁵⁰ The substance of this line of attack was hammered home by a national right-wing press that was avowedly pro-municipal reformer in its sympathies. A February 1907 *Times* article provided a striking example of this tendency.⁵¹ A progressive councilman's support for land nationalisation was deemed to be emblematic of a wider trend whereby 'socialist theories were being allowed to influence the business of the council'. Striking a similar tone, a piece published in the *Daily Mail* a month later singled out the duplicitousness of Progressive politicians, judging them to be 'wolves in sheep's clothing'.⁵² Their practical proposals were entirely dependent for inspiration on the 'vaunting indiscretions of their socialist allies'. As noted by Susan Pennybacker, the resonance and success of this politics of naming meant that the label socialist had taken on a sinister cast in London public life before the upheavals engendered by the Bolshevik Revolution and warned Progressives away from its use until control of the council was finally wrested from the municipal reformers in 1934.⁵³

⁴⁹ Peters, 'Anti-Socialism', 207; The Municipal Reformers won 79 seats to the Progressives' 39.

⁵⁰ Thompson, 'The Lights', 350-351.

⁵¹ 'London County Council', *The Times* (London), 20 Feb. 1907.

⁵² 'Your Duty To-Vote', *Daily Mail* (London), 1 Mar. 1907.

⁵³ Pennybacker, *A Vision*, 20.

The *Telegraph's* reportage of the socialist Sunday school issue should be placed within this wider political and press campaign to defame the progressives by association with socialism. It bore clear traces of a moral panic as this organised press campaign established the schools as a danger, identified children as being at risk, pleaded the necessity of informing a seemingly ignorant public opinion and demanded they take action on the issue by voting out the Progressives. In the wake of the election, as will be investigated in the pages below, the moral panic surrounding the schools would eventually result in corrective being taken on the part of the authorities. Claims that socialist schools were expanding in working class areas across London were clearly overstated. Further investigation into the nature of the 'problem' revealed that only four LCC classrooms were being let out for socialist purposes.⁵⁴ The presence of the schools in the capital was negligible; the fifth conference of the London Socialist Sunday School Union held in June 1907, for example, reported that its official records contained the names of 1,620 children, the average attendance every Sunday being 1,207.⁵⁵ These paltry figures point to the limited scope and overall weakness of the movement in London, especially when compared to the near 300,000 children counted as attending some form of religious worship in Richard Mudie-Smith's survey of spiritual life in London, his figures being collated between November 1902 and 1903 and in conjunction with the *Daily News*.⁵⁶

The attention paid by the *Telegraph* to the socialist schools can also be usefully explained in terms of a wedge issue. Political agents use wedge issues, which are controversial and fractious by nature, to either provoke or heighten divisions within a targeted group. The *Telegraph* utilised the subject of the socialist schools to incite and amplify pre-existing

⁵⁴ 'London Education', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 16 May. 1907.

⁵⁵ 'Socialist Sunday Schools', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 17 Jun. 1907.

⁵⁶ H.T. Meakin, 'The Children of the Slums: Their Relation to the Church', in R. Mudie-Smith, *The Religious Life of London* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904), 324.

tensions surrounding the relationship between Nonconformity and Progressivism in Edwardian London. As per the proposals of the 1902 Education Act, which abolished the directly-elected school boards in favour of local education authorities, the LCC controversially acquired the powers of the London School Board in 1904.⁵⁷ The act required the LCC to provide taxpayer funds for voluntary denominational schools, alienating many Nonconformists who deplored any provision of state support for Anglican and Catholic doctrines. Nonconformity had traditionally played a major role in London progressivism, making up a substantial proportion of its support base and consistently supplying activists, politicians and leaders.⁵⁸ John Benn, a Congregationalist businessman, was the Progressive's longest serving councillor and led the party from 1907 to 1917.⁵⁹ Paul Thompson, in his classic study of the tripartite relationship between socialist, radicals and labour in London, noted that many nonconformists had hoped that the council would 'refuse to administer the act or at least adopt a stern attitude to inadequate church schools'.⁶⁰ When neither situation materialised, the leading nonconformist newspaper, the *British Weekly*, denounced the LCC and welcomed moderate advances in the borough elections of 1906.⁶¹ Two of the pieces in the *Telegraph* evidently sought to strain such tensions even further. The first, a letter written under the pseudonym of 'Nonconformist' and headed with the title 'Protect the Children', condemned the Progressives and the Free Church Council for exhorting nonconformists to vote in large numbers for their approved candidates when they were seemingly oblivious of the 'infidel'

⁵⁷ For the Nonconformist furore and agitation over the 1902 Education Act see D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 141-147; J. Davis, 'The Progressive Council, 1889-1907', in A. Saint (ed.), *Politics & People of London: London County Council, 1889-1965* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1989), 39.

⁵⁸ M.R. Watts, *The Dissenters: Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), 313.

⁵⁹ Watts, *The Dissenters* 313.

⁶⁰ Thompson, *Socialists*, 180.

⁶¹ Davis, 'The Progressive', 40.

Sunday schools which were operating without censure in rate-aided school buildings.⁶² T. Wakelin Smith, the Municipal Reform councillor for the borough of Islington, concluded his letter by pondering what 'the attitude of the nonconformist conscience' was in relation to the 'deplorable new departure' as evidenced by the socialist schools.⁶³

The *Telegraph* also unfavourably compared the letting out of LCC classrooms for socialist purposes with the Progressive's hostility towards Empire Day. The brainchild of the Anglo-Irish aristocrat, Reginald Brabazon, better known as Lord Meath, Empire Day sought to promote the cause of imperial education.⁶⁴ Meath was inspired originally by the celebration of the day in Canada and endeavoured to establish a patriotic festival in schools throughout Britain and the empire.⁶⁵ Founding the Empire Day movement in 1903, Lord Meath, himself a product of British colonialism in Ireland, proposed that Queen Victoria's birthdate, the 24th of May, should be made a half-day school holiday and a full day of patriotic celebration.⁶⁶ Efforts to get Empire Day recognised as a national public holiday were initially unsuccessful and it took until 1916, amidst the patriotic fervour of the First World, for it to receive official government backing.⁶⁷ The *Telegraph* was a firm advocate for the recognition and celebration of Empire Day by public authorities. Marking its own celebration of the day in 1906, the newspaper criticised the London County Council for making 'no official recognition of the occasion, notwithstanding its historic and imperial significance'.⁶⁸ Londoners of all ages and classes had to be content with 'observances of a nature more or less private'. Nearly a whole

⁶² 'Protect the Children'.

⁶³ 'Godless Commandments'.

⁶⁴ J.O. Springhall, 'Lord Meath, Youth and Empire', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5 (1970), 105.

⁶⁵ J. English, 'Empire Day in Britain, 1904-1958', *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 248.

⁶⁶ J.M. MacKenzie, "In Touch with the Infinite": The BBC and the Empire, 1923-53' in J.M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 168.

⁶⁷ MacKenzie, "In Touch with the Infinite", 168.

⁶⁸ 'Empire Day', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 24 May. 1906.

year later in March 1907, Claire Norriss's first letter condemned the LCC for not allowing children to 'accept the gift of our nations flag on Empire Day'.⁶⁹ The Progressives seemed to be far more comfortable cavorting with the 'Red Flag of socialism' than the national standard which represented those 'brave men who have fought and died for generations past'.⁷⁰ After the 1907 election, the London education committee made official arrangements for the celebration of Empire Day in all public elementary schools controlled by the council.⁷¹ This was done with the intention of inculcating in children the 'idea of the essential unity of the empire, of close the family tie which existed amongst British subjects...and of the freedom characteristic of all its institutions'.⁷² First celebrated in schools controlled by the LCC on the 24th May 1907, the *Telegraph* had aided this process, establishing a fund to provide London primary schools with union flags and flagstaff's.⁷³

The initial furore manufactured by the *Telegraph* over the socialist Sunday schools would continue unabated after the election. The activities of the schools were discussed in a House of Commons debate on 15 March 1907. Sir William Anson, the former parliamentary secretary to the Board of Education, asked the sitting president of the Board of Education, Reginald McKenna, whether he was aware of socialistic schools that taught party political propaganda instead of religion to children in publicly maintained schools.⁷⁴ McKenna replied by stating that he was not aware of any such teaching in ratepayer financed-elementary schools and would not support any if there was sufficient proof of their existence.⁷⁵ The

⁶⁹ 'Socialists and Atheists in the Making'.

⁷⁰ 'Socialists and Atheists in the Making'.

⁷¹ 'London Education Committee', *The Times* (London), 10 May. 1907.

⁷² 'London Education Committee'.

⁷³ 'The Daily Telegraph Flag Fund: Popular Enthusiasm', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 2 May. 1907.

⁷⁴ HC Deb 13 March 1907, vol 171, cc 87-89.

https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1907/mar/13/civil-services#S4V0171P0_19070313_HOC_325 [Accessed 10 November 2016].

⁷⁵ HC Deb 13 March 1907, vol 171, cc 101.

importance of this exchange lies in the argument employed by William Anson. The Municipal Reform Party would continually replicate it in their consequent campaign to evict the Socialist Sunday Schools from publicly provided premises in London.

On May 1, 1907, the buildings and attendance sub-committee presented a report to the education committee of the London County Council. The education committee was advised to terminate the tenancies of the four socialist schools that conducted their lessons in council classrooms.⁷⁶ In the opinion of the sub-committee, the LCC classrooms were being used by socialists for non-religious purposes. References to God were deliberately excluded and much of the teaching advocated fundamental changes to the 'existing laws of society and government'. Over the course of the next month, municipal reformers would utilise these arguments extensively at meetings of the LCC education committee. On May 9, the Municipal Reform councillor for Finsbury, Henry Lygon, stated that 'nobody wanted to see young children being dragged to so-called Sunday schools and then have the alleged economic causes of social evils crammed down their throats'.⁷⁷ A week later, Dr Baxter Forman attacked the schools for ignoring religion and 'teaching children that private property in capital and other forms of ownership was public robbery'.⁷⁸

On June 5, the central council of the Municipal Reform Party passed a resolution imploring the LCC to take swift and decisive action against the socialist Sunday schools.⁷⁹ The Municipal Reformers also called on the LCC to completely revise its letting procedures, 'so as to limit the letting to recognise religious bodies only'.⁸⁰ In a reflection of the urgency of the

⁷⁶ 'London Education', *The Times* (London), 2 May. 1907.

⁷⁷ 'London Education', *The Times* (London), 9 May. 1907.

⁷⁸ 'London Education', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 16 May. 1907.

⁷⁹ 'The Municipal Reform Party', *The Times* (London), 5 Jun. 1907

⁸⁰ 'Socialist Sunday Schools', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 10 Jun. 1907.

issue, R.A Robinson, the leader of the party, deemed it subsequently necessary to by-pass the recommendations of the education committee and appeal directly to the LCC. On 11 June, Robinson submitted a motion to the council of the LCC calling for the immediate termination of the socialist Sunday school tenancies.⁸¹ Municipal Reformers like J.T. Taylor supported the motion because they believed 'it would ensure that only religious teaching would be taught to children on Sunday'.⁸² Despite concerted opposition from Progressive councilmen like Sidney Webb, who attacked the Municipal Reformers for attempting to 'define what could properly be called religion and what was to be excluded from the term religion', the motion was passed resoundingly.⁸³

The press devoted important column space to coverage of the issue. The *Daily Telegraph's* coverage of the schools was now buttressed by attention from other leading right-wing daily newspapers in London. In their specialised sections reporting on the activities of the LCC, publications like the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* devoted important column space to the socialist Sunday schools. This heightened press attention tread on now familiar ground; the teaching of the schools was attacked for being irreligious and political. An editorial in the *Daily Telegraph* warned of the dire consequences for municipal reformers who were wavering on the issue of banning the schools, and condemned those vacillators who worried about 'the dread of future recriminations... and the chance at being flouted at the elections'.⁸⁴ The impact of such rhetoric is hard to verify as there is barely any mention of the socialist Sunday schools in the printed and manuscript holdings of the Municipal Reform Party. However, the newspaper attention was clearly directed at dissipating some of the tensions emanating

⁸¹ 'London County Council', *The Times* (London) 12 Jun. 1907.

⁸² 'London County Council'.

⁸³ 'London County Council'.

⁸⁴ 'Editorial', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 10 Jun. 1907.

within the Municipal Reform Party over the issue. When the decision to evict the schools was made, the *Telegraph* proudly proclaimed that 'the moral mandate of London had been carried into effect'.⁸⁵

What did contemporaries make of this decision? Activists associated with the socialist Sunday school movement were in no doubt that the campaign of the municipal reformers had been initiated and sustained by the bitter attacks of the 'London Tory press'.⁸⁶ A.P. Hazell, one of the leaders of the movement in the capital, asserted that the press had 'exploited ignorant prejudices existing in the public mind against the economic doctrines of socialism'.⁸⁷ On July 29, 1907, the London socialist Sunday schools held a demonstration in Trafalgar Square to protest against the decision of the LCC.⁸⁸ Children from the schools were described as being 'taken to the square in wagonettes and were seated during the meeting on the steps of the Nelson column'. The Labour MP James O'Grady addressed the gathered audience, admonishing the new county council for abolishing the works department. The meeting concluded with the passing of a resolution which stated that 'this meeting of London citizens emphatically protests against the decision of the London County Council'.

An editorial in the *Church Times*, a newspaper that promoted a high church Anglican view on religious and public affairs, seriously questioned the wisdom of evicting the socialist schools.⁸⁹ It asserted that it was not the duty of local or national authorities to decide what constituted a proper religion. The principle of equality of treatment for different religions must 'extend to all' when it came to the letting of rate-supported classrooms, if not, it would be

⁸⁵ 'Editorial', *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 12 Jun. 1907.

⁸⁶ 'Report of Branches', *Young Socialist*, April 1907.

⁸⁷ 'Why we call Ourselves Socialists', *Young Socialist*, April 1907.

⁸⁸ Information for the meeting comes from this article 'Socialist Sunday Schools', *The Times*, 29 Jul. 1907.

⁸⁹ 'Editorial', *Church Times* (London), 21 Jun. 1907.

‘difficult for the church to ask for fair treatment when we are not ready to allow it to others’.⁹⁰

Writing retrospectively in his classic 1909 work *The Condition of England*, Charles Masterman, the Liberal politician and journalist, parodied the suburban middle class view of the working classes and referred to the socialist Sunday schools to prove his point. ‘The people of the hill are heavily taxed.... in order that the people of the plain...may be taught socialism in Sunday schools, with parodies of remembered hymns’.⁹¹ Despite these objections, the Municipal Reformers proudly publicised their decision to evict the schools in subsequent electoral campaigns. During the LCC election of 1910, for example, the party took out a one-page advertisement in the *Times* under the heading ‘Good Government of London’.⁹² The first section of the advertisement called readers’ attention to the municipal reformers’ fiscal prudence and administrative efficiency. The second section was headed with the title ‘socialism’ and declared that the municipal reformers had stopped socialists ‘from using the LCC schools on Sunday for the purposes of teaching children their doctrines’.

II

The second phase of agitation against the schools began in May 1910 with the foundation of the Children’s Social Sunday Union (CSSU).⁹³ Classing itself as a Christian mission dedicated to resisting the spread of atheistic socialism amongst children in Britain, this nationally-orientated pledge was largely illusory as the union operated entirely within the confines of

⁹⁰ ‘Editorial’.

⁹¹ C.F.G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (Meuthen: London, 1909), 72.

⁹² ‘Good Government of London’, *The Times* (London), 19 Feb. 1910.

⁹³ The information for the CSSU’s activities in this chapter comes from the personal papers of Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1903 to 1928. The sources specifically come from a letter sent to Davidson by Lady Jane Taylor pleading for his support for the CSSU. The letter also contained 6 pamphlets, a document detailing the activities of the Sunday schools run by the CSSU, and a cutting from the newspaper of the religious charity, the Given-Wilson Institute. All the documents are undated and are headed with the title ‘The Children’s Social Sunday Service Union for the Christian Faith’. For the founding date of the CSSU see London, Lambeth Palace Library, (Hereafter LPL): Davidson 181, ‘The Children’s Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith’, fo. 25; for the letter see LPL: Davidson 181, ‘Letter from Lady Jane Taylor to Randall Davidson’, fo. 24, 14 May. 1912.

London. The CSSU owed its existence to the efforts of Claire Norriss, the original instigator of the 1907 *Telegraph* LCC press campaign, and Lady Jane Taylor, an aristocratic philanthropist and leading advocate of women's emigration schemes.⁹⁴ The two had initially struck up a friendship due to their shared perception of the great harm being done to children in socialist Sunday schools.⁹⁵ Both had made visits to the schools and agreed that they were destructive of every Christian doctrine and social system in the country.⁹⁶ The decision was consequently made to form an organisation for the protection of children from socialist contamination, utilising Taylor's palatial home in Belgravia as a base for meetings.⁹⁷ Taylor was appointed president and Norris named secretary.⁹⁸ This was the manner in which the CSSU was brought into being.

The CSSU's first meeting took place at Sunderland House, a Mayfair town house originally built for the Duke of Marlborough, in December 1910.⁹⁹ Lord Meath presided over the gathering and declared to the assembled audience that 'over 5,000 children were now being taught agnostic socialism in 94 Sunday schools stated for that purpose'.¹⁰⁰ The only way to counteract this propaganda, he went on to claim, was to establish a Christian school, 'for children not already attending one', in known areas where socialist teaching was taking place.¹⁰¹ The patrician basis and identity of the union was confirmed by the titles of subsequent speakers, multiple ladies, a duchess, a dowager and a marquise.¹⁰² Lady Jane Taylor soon became the leading figure in the organisation after a dispute with Norriss led her

⁹⁴ 'King's Bench Division'.

⁹⁵ 'King's Bench Division'.

⁹⁶ 'King's Bench Division'.

⁹⁷ 'King's Bench Division'.

⁹⁸ 'King's Bench Division'.

⁹⁹ 'Socialist Sunday Schools', *The Times* (London), 9 Dec. 1910; For Marlborough House see H.B. Wheatley, *Round about Piccadilly and Pall Mall* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1870), 27.

¹⁰⁰ 'Socialist Sunday Schools'.

¹⁰¹ 'Socialist Sunday Schools'.

¹⁰² 'Socialist Sunday Schools'.

to leave the CSSU in May 1911, and subsequently found the rival group the Children's Non-Socialist League.¹⁰³ Born in 1830, Taylor possessed impeccable high society credentials and close familial connections to Britain's defence establishment, the daughter of the eighth Marquis of Tweeddale and the younger sister of Lord John Hay, a distinguished officer in the Royal Navy.¹⁰⁴ A firm supporter of Britain's empire and leading advocate for the rights of war veterans, organising an 1882 fund for the relief of families of soldiers killed during the Anglo-Egyptian war, Taylor was also the vice-president of the Women's Emigration Society, a body established in 1880 with the goal of encouraging single 'educated' women to find work in the colonies by financially assisting 'deserving applicants'.¹⁰⁵ She also appears to have been a supporter of women's suffrage, being a prominent attendee at a Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association meeting in 1909, where one speaker spoke of the 'glaring grievance' and great injustice faced by women under the existing electoral system.¹⁰⁶ Eighty years of age in 1910, Taylor's role in the CSSU marked her last substantial engagement with affairs of a political and public nature.

CSSU propaganda proclaimed that socialists were deliberately targeting the offspring of irreligious parents whose lives had never been touched by the teachings of the gospel.¹⁰⁷ Counteracting this tendency by establishing Sunday schools in urban areas where socialist teaching was taking place and pledging not to interfere with those already attending a religious Sunday school, the CSSU consciously defined itself as a Christian mission, avowing to

¹⁰³ 'King's Bench Division'. The activities of the Children's Non-Socialist League will not be examined due to a dearth of existing materials.

¹⁰⁴ R.P. Dod, *Dod's Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage, of Great Britain and Ireland, for 1865* (London; Whitaker & Co., 1865), 731; P. Reesse, *The Men Who Gave us Wings: Britain and the Aeroplane 1796-1914* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Aviation, 2014), 82.

¹⁰⁵ 'Egyptian War Fund', *The Times* (London), 10 Oct. 1882; 'Emigration of Women', *The Times* (London), 3 Nov. 1883; 'The Emigration of Women', *The Times* (London), 5 Jul. 1884.

¹⁰⁶ 'Woman Suffrage', *The Times* (London), 19 Feb. 1909.

¹⁰⁷ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 29.

reach those minors 'who were being taught to deny the existence of God'.¹⁰⁸ The CSSU schools would 'inculcate, respect, reverence and order in the minds of children', preventing their capturing by anti-Christian propagandists and allowing them to become versed in the precious truths of the gospel.¹⁰⁹ Great emphasis was placed on the sanctity of the family unit and the duty of children to be respectful to their parents. The lasting welfare of the young, 'in this world and the next', depended on virtues of honesty, truthfulness, obedience and duty.¹¹⁰ The CSSU claimed to be strictly non-political and un-denominational, all religious believers were encouraged to take an interest.¹¹¹ It especially deplored the socialist appropriation of popular church culture. Parodying 'religious terms and observances', the socialists replaced the ten commandments with a secular version, sang seditious songs and categorised them as hymns, expressed beliefs in the form of a catechism and closed meetings with the singing of a doxology.¹¹²

What was the fate of the CSSU's Sunday school scheme? A 1912 document noted that seven such schools has been founded in London, with a concentration in districts with large working-class populations such as Fulham, Canning Town, Walsworth, Tottenham, Bexley Heath, Nine Elms and Plaistow.¹¹³ This geographical and social emphasis reflected long-standing attitudes about the link between irreligiosity and urban living, especially in areas inhabited by large numbers of workers living in cramped and unhygienic conditions. This discourse of the 'unholy city' had been active in religious circles since the dawn of industrialisation in the late-eighteenth century and was buttressed in the following century

¹⁰⁸ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 29.

¹⁰⁹ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 28.

¹¹⁰ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 33.

¹¹¹ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 33.

¹¹² LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 35.

¹¹³ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fos. 25-27.

by empirical studies like the 1851 census of religious worship in Britain.¹¹⁴ According to its enumerator Horace Mann, the census demonstrated that the vast majority of the 'habitual neglecters of the public ordinance of religion' largely corresponded to the 'labouring myriads of the urban working classes'.¹¹⁵ London occupied an especially prominent place in these visions; its size, density and scale the antithesis to the pre-industrial religious community, an impression solidified by the moral panic surrounding Andrew Mearns' sensationalist 1883 pamphlet the *Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, which claimed to expose the endemic sin, misery and corruption of slum areas, and two censuses, conducted by the *British Weekly* in 1886-87 and the *Daily News* in 1902-1903, outlining the low levels of metropolitan church attendance.¹¹⁶

CSSU rhetoric specifically targeted the 'street arab', a phrase that middle and upper class philanthropists commonly used to describe rootless street children bereft of homes and families, and this category was deemed to be the most susceptible to atheistic-socialist ideology.¹¹⁷ A description of a CSSU school established in Plaistow appears to confirm that the children in attendance emanated from conditions of poverty, while not necessarily being orphans.¹¹⁸ Packed into rooms lent out by the religious charity, the Given-Wilson Institute, the children were described as shivering, half-starving and some had even turned up in their bare feet.¹¹⁹ Although founded by Taylor, the school in Plaistow was run primarily by the sub-

¹¹⁴ C.G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 20-25.

¹¹⁵ Quoted from G. Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: The Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity', in G. Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain: Volume II: Traditions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 68.

¹¹⁶ Brown, *The Death*, 25-26.

¹¹⁷ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 32; for the 'street arab' see L. Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 25.

¹¹⁸ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fos. 39-40.

¹¹⁹ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 39.

warden of the Given-Wilson Institute, a woman named Mrs Bolton who was also involved in the activities of the CSSU school in Canning Town.¹²⁰ Similarly, in Fulham, the CSSU co-operated with the local branch of the Young Woman's Christian Association, the latter providing the school with four teachers.¹²¹ A CSSU document claimed that a total of 1,002 'scholars' were attending six special purpose schools in the London area.¹²²

The CSSU sought to build a basis of support for its activities by alerting leading figures and organisations within the Church of England to the dangers of the socialist Sunday schools. Lady Jane Taylor eagerly pursued the approval and blessing of Randall Davidson, the sitting Archbishop of Canterbury. According to his personal papers, Davidson had been first alerted to the existence of the schools as a result of the press attention surrounding the 1907 LCC election.¹²³ Referencing a piece in the *Daily Telegraph* series, he had written a letter to L. Scott Lidgett, a Wesleyan social reformer and Progressive member of the London education committee, enquiring as to whether the allegations about the committee's supposed bias against church schools were true in light of their stance on socialist schools.¹²⁴ Lidgett replied that no such prejudice existed on the part of the central education committee but he could not account for every single decision taken in the boroughs.¹²⁵ Appearing satisfied with this explanation, Davidson's response noted that Lidgett's position was 'reasonable and very much what I had expected'.¹²⁶ Five years later in May 1912, Lady Jane Taylor wrote to the archbishop noting pertinent details of a prior discussion relating to the affairs of the CSSU.¹²⁷ In this letter,

¹²⁰ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fos. 35, 39-40.

¹²¹ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 25.

¹²² LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fos. 25-27.

¹²³ LPL: 'Letter from Randall Davidson to J. Scott Lidgett', Davidson 135, fo. 372, 2 Mar. 1907.

¹²⁴ LPL: 'Letter from Randall Davidson to J. Scott Lidgett', Davidson 135, fo. 372, 2 Mar. 1907.

¹²⁵ LPL: 'Letter from J. Scott Lidgett to Randall Davidson', Davidson 135, fos. 373-374, 4 Mar. 1907.

¹²⁶ LPL: 'Letter from Randall Davidson to J. Scott Lidgett', Davidson 135, fo. 375, 5 Mar. 1907.

¹²⁷ LPL: 'Letter from Lady Jane Taylor to Randall Davidson', Davidson 181 fo. 24, 14 May. 1912.

Taylor relayed information about an executive committee meeting of the CSSU where it had been decided to ask Davidson to join the movement, pledge his support for its goals and activities, and speak at its annual general meeting due to be held in June 1912.¹²⁸ The archbishop replied by stating that he could not attend or address the annual general meeting and pertinently, went on to outline why he could not publicly back the CSSU.¹²⁹ Being the head of a recognised church with an associated Sunday school movement, 'he could not be seen to be at the forefront of this new plan which is at present an experiment only'. Wishing Taylor luck in her efforts to 'counteract existing ills', Davidson stated that individuals 'keen about the matter' were best served 'by stimulating the clergy and if really necessary starting new schools'.

This lack of official church support became a recurrent theme and hampered the effectiveness of the CSSU. A member of the union, Major H.C.C. Gibbings, had succeeded in persuading the London diocese to convene a special committee dedicated to considering the best ways to combat the teaching in the socialist Sunday schools in May 1912 but a year later would complain publicly that the said committee, of which he was a member, was unwilling to take the evidence of the CSSU into serious consideration.¹³⁰ At the same meeting in 1913, Taylor contended that the opposition of the clergy and a lack of funds were the two major difficulties inhibiting the operations of the CSSU.¹³¹ The organisation also struggled to maintain the existence of its schools. One undated pamphlet, but probably written in 1911/12, noted that the CSSU was 'struggling to maintain four schools' while the 'socialists had over 94

¹²⁸ LPL: 'Letter from Lady Jane Taylor to Randall Davidson', Davidson 181, fo. 24, 14 May. 1912.

¹²⁹ LPL: 'Letter from Randall Davidson to Lady Jane Taylor', Davidson 181, fo. 41, 15 May. 1912.

¹³⁰ 'Lady St. Helier', *The Times* (London), 9 May. 1913.

¹³¹ 'Lady St. Helier'.

already existing in Great Britain'.¹³² The lack of support for the union was seen as a damning indictment of a country that was seemingly uninterested in combating 'those who turned the most sacred tenets held by the Christians' into objects of ridicule.¹³³ While there is no exact date for the winding down of the union, there is no mention of its activities after 1914.¹³⁴

Analogous to the advocacy of the CSSU, the London *Standard* newspaper advertised the dangers of socialist schools in its 'Red Peril' series which appeared in December 1911.¹³⁵ Published with the reputed aim of unmasking the growth of revolutionary and atheist socialism in Britain, in actuality, the series functioned as a screen through which Conservatives could attack the Liberal Party and its efforts to disestablish the Anglican Church in Wales. One letter written by F.E. Smith, the future Lord Birkenhead and a vociferous defender of the church establishment condemned the Liberal government 'for showing wanton disregard for the sanctity of religious endowment'.¹³⁶ He could think of nothing 'more calculated to expedite the progress of the forces of unbelief than the cessation of the state recognition of religion'.¹³⁷ Smith's intervention is a reminder that Edwardian Conservative anti-socialism targeted liberals as much as it did socialists, accusing the former of legitimising the doctrines of class warfare and irreligion through their alliance with the Labour Party. Smith's conservative colleague, James Thompson, contributed a piece to the 'Red Peril' series denouncing the existence of socialist Sunday schools in Liverpool. Thompson, the chief conservative agent for the city and loyal churchman, reiterated the now familiar criticism that socialists revelled in preaching class war doctrines to the young.¹³⁸ He concluded the article on a positive note by

¹³² LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 38.

¹³³ LPL: 'Children's Social Sunday Union for the Christian Faith', Davidson 181, fo. 38.

¹³⁴ LPL: 'Letter from Lady Jane Taylor to Randall Davidson', Davidson 193, fos. 199-200, 9 Jul. 1914.

¹³⁵ The first article appeared on December 9. 1911; 'The Red Peril', *The Standard* (London), 9 Dec. 1911.

¹³⁶ 'The Red Peril', *The Standard* (London), 12 Dec. 1911.

¹³⁷ 'The Red Peril'.

¹³⁸ 'The Red Peril', *The Standard* (London), 13 Dec. 1911.

remarking of his confidence that the present generation's adherence to Christian truth would guard against the irreligious machinations of socialists. A further article attacking the iniquities of the 'Red Catechism' appeared in the newspaper three days later on December 16th and received especial praise from a certain Lady Jane Taylor, who lauded the *Standard* for exposing the corruption of the schools and quoted an Old Testament passage from the Book of Jeremiah to outline her own distinctive educational philosophy.¹³⁹ Children should be led 'back into the old paths where is the good way'.¹⁴⁰ A week later on the 23rd of December, a letter written by Edward Taylor, a diocesan inspector of voluntary schools in Cornwall, explicitly connected rising crime rates with the general and systematic establishment of socialist Sunday schools. Unsurprisingly, he deemed denominational religious education to be the best prophylactic against the 'red catechism'.¹⁴¹

The Anti-Socialist Union also strived to gain church support for its campaign of agitation against the socialist schools. In September 1912, the prominent Christian Socialist F. Lewis Donaldson spoke of his reception of a propaganda package from the Anti-Socialist Union in the correspondence section of the *Church Times*.¹⁴² The package contained a list of socialist Sunday schools, a leaflet condemning the trade unionist Ben Tillett, a Free Thought Socialist League pamphlet entitled 'The Parson's Doom' and a membership form for the Anti-Socialist Union. Donaldson unequivocally condemned the actions of the union. 'This propaganda was calculated to do harm to both our church and its Sunday schools'.¹⁴³ The claims of the Anti-Socialist Union were, however, taken seriously by figures in the church with less overt political

¹³⁹ 'The Red Peril', *The Standard* (London), 16 Dec. 1911; For Taylor's response 'Letters', *The Standard* (London), 18 Dec. 1911.

¹⁴⁰ 'Letters'.

¹⁴¹ 'Letters', *The Standard* (London), 23 Dec. 1911.

¹⁴² 'Anti-Socialist Union Methods', *Church Times* (London), 13 Sep. 1912.

¹⁴³ 'Anti-Socialist Union Methods'.

leanings. A June 1912 diocesan report in Manchester stated that 'a few leading church people in the diocese had been shocked at the revelations of this disgusting pamphlet', referring to the anti-religious tone of the 'The Parson Doom'.¹⁴⁴ The diocesan missionary, the report went on to claim, was enquiring into the 'best way of meeting obviously infidel teachings in such schools'.¹⁴⁵ The Christian Socialist James Adderley expressed concern at the Anti-Socialist Union's influence, believing the group to be 'misleading many good church people' and most worryingly of all, many seem inclined to copy its methods.¹⁴⁶ He explicitly used the example of the Mothers' Union, an Anglican woman's organisation, who had printed an article which 'took everything the Anti-Socialist Union said for gospel'.¹⁴⁷ Making matters worse, the Mothers' Union had refused to give Adderley a right of reply in their official publication.

This mention of the Mothers' Union is extremely significant in the overall context of this chapter as it would become the main focal point for religious opposition to the socialist and proletarian schools. Founded by the Anglican evangelical, Mary Sumner, in 1876, the union promoted the sanctity of motherhood, marriage, domesticity and home life. It campaigned vigorously against the liberalisation of divorce laws, regarded abortion as a grave sin and feared the curtailment of parental responsibility by the state and social services. Cordelia Moyse, the historian who has written the most comprehensive account of the movement, argues that the Mothers' Union attracted members because it was a genuinely broad church society, able to bypass the heated doctrinal divisions between evangelicals and Anglo-

¹⁴⁴ 'Manchester Notes', *Church Times* (London), 8 Nov. 1912.

¹⁴⁵ 'Manchester Notes'.

¹⁴⁶ 'The Methods of the Anti-Socialist Union', *Church Times* (London), 20 Sep. 1912.

¹⁴⁷ 'The Methods'.

Catholics and possessing close ties to youth groups like the Girls Friendly Society, ensuring a steady supply of recruits.¹⁴⁸

In a similar manner to secular organisations such as the Primrose League, which pioneered female conservative activism in the late-Victorian period, the Mothers' Union empowered Anglican women to participate in the public affairs of the church.¹⁴⁹ It was a religious movement marked by great numbers; by 1909 it could count 316,000 members nationwide, and was based in all but one of the dioceses in England and Wales.¹⁵⁰ Fifteen years later in 1925, its British membership had grown to over 400,000 while impressive expansion overseas in countries like Australia, New Zealand and India meant that total membership worldwide stood at over 4 million by 1930.¹⁵¹

Recent work conducted on the Mothers' Union by Moyse and Catriona Beaumont highlights its involvement in political causes. Members and branches engaged in debates about religious education, housing provision, maternity care and the payment of family allowances for mothers.¹⁵² A non-party organisation, politics represented a controversial topic, and participation was only deemed necessary when public affairs touched upon matters directly relating to its religious ethos and objectives.¹⁵³ Political activism, in other words, could be justified by reference to religious and moral considerations rather than partisan ones. This proved to be a rather difficult position to sustain as Mothers' Union leaders explicitly

¹⁴⁸ Moyse, *A History*, 18, 60; For the Girls Friendly Society see B. Harrison, 'For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls Friendly Society, 1874-1920', *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), 107-138.

¹⁴⁹ For the Primrose League see M. Pugh, *The Tories and the People, 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

¹⁵⁰ Moyse, *A History*, 41.

¹⁵¹ 428,000 members by September 1925 according to a meeting of the Mothers' Union central council; See LPL: Mothers' Union Central Council Minutes, 1/7, fo. 127, 2 & 3 Dec. 1925; for the 4 million figure see Moyse, *A History*, 17.

¹⁵² Moyse, *A History*, 67-69, 69-72; Beaumont, *Housewives*, 14.

¹⁵³ Moyse, *A History*, 72, 76.

supported the Anti-Socialist Union, and would later on aid the British Empire Union in its campaign of agitation against the schools. A substantial presence in civil society, both in the pre-and-post-World One periods, and boasting a largely middle class membership, the union's critique of socialism reminds us of the shortcomings of Ross McKibbin's static model of 'apolitical sociability'.¹⁵⁴ The anti-socialist views of the Mothers' Union were not determined by a set of silent assumptions that were secretly political; they were direct, expressive, and placed socialists outside the pale of legitimate political activity. Such politicised sentiments were controversial and never went unchallenged but appear to have had the backing of the leadership and were publicly disseminated to members through the means of the union's literature. This anti-socialist worldview also calls into question arguments, especially as advanced by Caitriona Beaumont, that stress the progressivism of the Mothers' Union, emphasising its belief in active citizenship and involvement in causes that improved the standing of women in British society.¹⁵⁵ While not denying that the Mothers' Union provided an important avenue for women to become involved in public and political life, the chapter argues that the union's attitude towards socialism reveals a more conservative and reactionary side. Further to this point, the chapter will investigate the close ideological similarities between the Mothers' Union and the Conservative Party's women's section, the Women's Unionist Organisation, in a later part of the chapter.

The Mothers' Union's initial interest in the schools appears to have been piqued by a list detailing the addresses of all the known socialist Sunday schools in Britain. Compiled by Claire Norriss, acting on behalf of the Children's Non-Socialist League, and Reginald Wilson, a

¹⁵⁴ McKibbin, *Classes*, 96.

¹⁵⁵ Beaumont, *Housewives*, 53-54; Moyse mentions the Mothers Unions' anti-socialism but does not devote a great detail of attention to the subject see Moyse, *A History*, 67.

member of the Anti-Socialist Union's education committee and future secretary of the British Empire Union, the list, receipt of which was confirmed at a January 1912 executive committee meeting of the Mothers' Union, claimed that 120 socialist Sunday schools were indoctrinating a total of 7,000 children in Britain.¹⁵⁶ The Mothers' Union thought the claims were credible and began investigating the matter at a swift pace, sending out letters to three London-based archdeacons, to local branches where suspected anti-Christian teaching was taking place and to other Anglican organisations such as the Church Schools Emergency League.¹⁵⁷ It also conducted an interview with an Anti-Socialist Union member named Miss Robinson, who had started up a settlement in Walworth to combat the evil of anti-Christian teaching in south London, and solicited the advice of H.A. Lester, the director of the Bishop of London's Sunday School council.¹⁵⁸ Lester believed that the best way to make Christian Sunday schools more efficient and attractive was 'to visit the homes where the poison has entered'. The central secretary of the Mothers' Union collated all this information and dispatched it to the Archbishop of Canterbury via the means of a letter in March 1912. Davidson's reply reiterated his prior doubts relating to the threats of the schools:

I confess myself somewhat sceptical as to the scale on which these schools are going on in England. That they exist is certain, but I believe it to be only in a few places that they are tangible centres of mischief.¹⁵⁹

Davidson's doubt was well merited. On the 18th of March 1912, ten days after the central secretary's letter to the archbishop, the executive committee of the Mothers' Union reported

¹⁵⁶ LPL: Mother's Union Executive Committee Minutes /1/6/, fo. 135, 10 Jan. 1912.

¹⁵⁷ Copies of these letters were sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury by the central secretary of the Mothers' Union. This is discussed below but for the letters sees LPL: 'Letter from Mrs Maude to Archbishop of Canterbury', Davidson 181, fos. 3, 14, 15, 20, 21, 8 Mar. 1912.

¹⁵⁸ LPL: 'Letter from Mrs Maude to Archbishop of Canterbury', Davidson 181, fo. 18, 22 Jan. 1912.

¹⁵⁹ LPL: 'Letter from Archbishop of Canterbury to Mrs Maude', Davidson 181, fo. 23, 12 Mar. 1912.

that 603 letters on anti-Christian teaching had been sent out, 287 to Mothers Union workers and 316 to clergymen.¹⁶⁰ The response had been desultory with only 13 answers received and none admitting the existence of organisations for anti-Christian teaching in their specific district.¹⁶¹

Despite the apparent ignorance of members and the scepticism of the leader of their church, the Mothers' Union began publicly promulgating the dangers of the schools. In July 1912, an article in the *Mothers' Union Journal* detailed the events of a socialist demonstration in Hyde Park where children were made to hold up a banner bearing the words 'There is no God'.¹⁶² It referenced another socialist meeting in Coventry in which a girl was baptised into the cause of the 'red revolution'.¹⁶³ The article concluded by imploring interested mothers to read a pamphlet called 'Danger Ahead', written by Reginald Wilson of the Anti-Socialist Union.¹⁶⁴ A further article appeared in October 1912 criticising socialists for engaging in the 'corruption of future generations'.¹⁶⁵ Socialist ideology was futile, tyrannical and inconsistent and would usher in a state of affairs 'where liberty to lead an individual life and to do one's work would be impossible'.¹⁶⁶ Such an overt articulation of anti-socialist beliefs did offend some members as attested to by a January 1913 article in the *Mothers' Union Journal* which reassured those who thought the organisation was being unfair to Christian socialists.¹⁶⁷ The

¹⁶⁰ LPL: Mother's Union Executive Committee Minutes /1/6/, fo. 163, 18 Mar. 1912.

¹⁶¹ LPL: Mother's Union Executive Committee Minutes /1/6/, fo. 163, 18 Mar. 1912.

¹⁶² 'Socialist Sunday Schools', *Mothers' Union Journal*, Jul. 1912.

¹⁶³ 'Socialist Sunday Schools'.

¹⁶⁴ 'Socialist Sunday Schools'.

¹⁶⁵ 'More About Socialist Sunday Schools', *Mothers' Union Journal*, Oct. 1912.

¹⁶⁶ 'More About Socialist Sunday Schools'.

¹⁶⁷ 'Anti-Christian Teaching', *Mothers' Union Journal*, Jan. 1913.

writer of the prior October article apologised for the confusion and stated that her article should have been headed with the title 'Anti-Christian Socialist Sunday Schools'.¹⁶⁸

Privately, the leadership of the Mothers' Union continued to lobby the Archbishop of Canterbury for support. On July 4, 1912, the Countess of Chichester, the central president of the Mothers' Union, wrote a letter to the Archbishop's wife stating that the anti-Christian Sunday schools had doubled since the last convocation and now had upwards of 13,000 children and adults attending.¹⁶⁹ She went on to remark that in a Christian country surely there was a difference between 'religious liberty and irreligious license and sedition', and referenced an incident in an unmentioned northern town where authorities had prevented Mormons from settling in the area.¹⁷⁰ Chichester believed that this case provided some sort of legal precedent for shutting down the schools. The Archbishop responded in a rather terse manner, questioning Chichester's reliance on statistics that he believed were probably gleaned from 'Lady Jane Taylor and others on socialist schools'.¹⁷¹ He rejected Chichester's case 'that somehow or other the law ought to prevent the existence of such schools' and stated that the Mormon case had nothing to do with religion but with fundamental moral issues relating to the evil of polygamy.¹⁷² Mary Sumner, the founder and honorary president of the Mothers' Union, forwarded on a propaganda package she had received from Anti-Socialist Union activist Claude Lowther in the same month as Chichester's letters to Davidson.¹⁷³ The Archbishop, once again, restated his suspicions of the radical right, asserting those who were 'following Mr Lowther's lead are making a mistake by lumping all socialists together as a whole'.¹⁷⁴ Many

¹⁶⁸ 'Anti-Christian Teaching'.

¹⁶⁹ LPL: 'Letter from Countess of Chichester to Mrs Davidson', Davidson 181, fo. 46, 4 Jul. 1912.

¹⁷⁰ LPL: 'Letter from Countess of Chichester to Mrs Davidson', Davidson 181, fo. 46, 4 Jul. 1912.

¹⁷¹ LPL: 'Letter from Archbishop of Canterbury to Lady Chichester', Davidson 181, fo. 47, 12 Jul. 1912.

¹⁷² LPL: 'Letter from Archbishop of Canterbury to Lady Chichester', Davidson 181, fo. 47, 12 Jul. 1912.

¹⁷³ LPL: 'Letter from Mary Sumner to Archbishop of Canterbury', Davidson 181, fos. 48-50, 16 Jul. 1912.

¹⁷⁴ LPL: 'Letter from Archbishop of Canterbury to Mary Sumner', Davidson 181, fo. 95, 22 Jul. 1912.

socialists were 'among our most devoted Christian teachers' and could not be regarded as anti-religious just because people disagreed with their political opinions.¹⁷⁵

In October 1912, the Church of England convened a private conference on the topic of the schools at Westminster Abbey.¹⁷⁶ The conference gathered together delegates from the leading organisations within the Anglican Church, which included representatives of the Mothers' Union, the Christian Social Union, the Church Army, the Girls Friendly Society, the Christian Evidence Society and the Sunday School Institute. Interestingly, the only non-church delegate invited was H.F. Wyatt, a member of the right-wing pressure group the Navy League, who was unable to attend the gathering.¹⁷⁷ The overt purpose of the conference was to inquire into 'the alleged growth of atheistic and anti-Christian socialist teaching in the present day'.¹⁷⁸ The Countess of Chichester, representing the Mothers' Union, argued that the church had to stem the tide of irreligion that was sweeping 'over the land at this moment'. In six months, the schools in London had supposedly 'doubled'.¹⁷⁹ For H.A. Lester, chairman of the Bishop of London's Sunday School Council, the socialist schools were symptomatic of a wider existential crisis in English religious belief.¹⁸⁰ The decline of religious education in the elementary schools was the key cause of the unrest of the present day. The non-Christian beliefs of the socialist Sunday schools were more easily disseminated among children in a society that did not value the importance of religious education. One speaker noted the difficulty of coming up with a

¹⁷⁵ LPL: 'Letter from Archbishop of Canterbury to Mary Sumner', Davidson 181, fo. 95, 22 Jul. 1912.

¹⁷⁶ LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fos. 96-117, 14 Oct. 1912.

¹⁷⁷ LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 97, 14 Oct. 1912.

¹⁷⁸ LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 96, 14 Oct. 1912.

¹⁷⁹ LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 97, 14 Oct. 1912.

¹⁸⁰ LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 101, 14 Oct. 1912.

solution when they could not agree on the numbers of schools in existence. 'Mr Lester mentions 14,000, another paper mentions half that number, another says 12 or 13,000'.¹⁸¹

The Lord Bishop of Hull, a member of the Christian Social Union, argued that the best way to outflank the socialist schools was to build up the educational institutions of the church, mentioning Sunday and voluntary schools specifically. Socialism, he warned, could not be readily conflated with irreligion and atheism as some individualists 'were more dangerous in their materialism' than socialists.¹⁸² C.L. Drawbridge of the Christian Evidence Society, an apologetic group that defended religious faith against the attacks of secularists and sceptics, cautioned against the danger of attaching the church to a specific political cause. 'If an anti-socialist begins to speak on our platform, we pull his coat tails off and put someone else up'.¹⁸³

The consensus view at the conference was that socialism could not be construed as atheistic and hostile to religion but the schools were recognised as a problem.¹⁸⁴ Vigorous efforts by the church in the field of education constituted the only possible remedy to the menace of socialist teaching. Very little support was expressed for the objectives of the radical right and ultimately a resolution passed establishing a consultative council composed of the bodies present at the conference.¹⁸⁵

The Mothers' Union, then, was clearly an exception to the prevailing rule. Its support for the agitation against the schools would be a feature of the interwar years, being the only

¹⁸¹ LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 101, 14 Oct. 1912.

¹⁸² LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 103, 14 Oct. 1912.

¹⁸³ LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 106, 14 Oct. 1912.

¹⁸⁴ Miss Chitty, a member of the Church Schools' Emergence League and supporter of action against the schools, remarked that 'I find myself in the unpleasant position of being in a somewhat small minority this afternoon'. See LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 112, 14 Oct. 1912.

¹⁸⁵ LPL: 'Report of a Private Conference held at the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey', Davidson 181, fo. 117, 14 Oct. 1912.

notable religious group to come out in favour of the 'Seditious and Blasphemous Teachings' bill. How do we explain this apparent anomaly? The Mothers' Union was an avowedly non-political organisation interested in safeguarding mothers, domestic life and the family. The influence of the leadership was one decisive factor. The Countess of Chichester, its central president, and Mary Sumner, the founder and honorary president, both petitioned the Archbishop of Canterbury to take action on the matter of anti-Christian teaching. This trend continued in the 1920s with prominent leaders like Hudson Lyall driving the issue forcefully. The authority of the leadership was not the only factor that came into play. The Mothers' Union's belief in a conventional family unhindered by materialistic attractions and permissive lifestyles was a common thread running through Conservative and broader right-wing ideology. Groups such as the British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union would appeal to these instincts in the 1920s.

III

The campaign against the socialist schools in the 1920s was led by two newly-formed organisations, the British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union. This did not constitute a novel departure from the agitation of the Edwardian period as these groups largely employed the same tactics, strategies and personnel, and were geographically orientated towards London and the south-east. One significant difference can be attributed to the heightened anxiety provoked by the spread of international communism in right-wing circles, a fear that manifested itself in the insidious Bolshevik plot to capture the minds of the children in proletarian Sunday schools. The proletarian schools, in contrast to the pre-war period where they were not targeted in a systematic fashion by reactionary forces, became a focal point of conservative paranoia and were commonly portrayed as the inevitable outcome

of the failure to adequately confront and quell the threat of the socialist schools in the Edwardian era. This depiction of proletarian schools as the logical consequences of socialist teaching when unimpeded by patriotic and religious doctrines mirrored the ideological strategy of interwar Conservatives who argued that the left, even if ostensibly moderate, had a tendency to lurch towards political extremism. The overthrow of Alexander Kerensky's provisional government by the Bolsheviks in the October revolution provided a warning shot to all those who pointed to the relatively restrained nature of British socialism.¹⁸⁶

What was the lynchpin of this campaign? Both the British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union placed great weight on the value of public opinion and sought to alert a supposedly ignorant populace to the dangers of the socialist and proletarian schools. Figures such as Reginald Wilson, the general secretary of the British Empire Union and pre-war member of the Anti-Socialist Union's education committee, called for legislative action to be taken against the schools and spearheaded a campaign to pass a 'Seditious and Blasphemous Teachings' bill, which sought to suppress the teaching of such doctrines to children.¹⁸⁷ First introduced as a private member bill in 1922 by the Conservative MP and British Empire Union member John Butcher, this proposed piece of legislation was initially crowded out by the Labour Party's Right to Work bill.¹⁸⁸ It passed through the Lords in 1924 but attracted little attention owing to the disbandment of parliament for summer recess and went as far as the Report Stage in the House of Commons in 1927 only to meet the fate of being talked out.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ S. Ball, *Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 56.

¹⁸⁷ HL Deb 03 July 1924, vol 58, cc158.

<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1924/jun/03/seditious-and-blasphemous-teaching-to> [12 September 2018].

¹⁸⁸ Gerrard, *Radical*, 89

¹⁸⁹ K.D. Ewing & C.A. Gearty, *The Struggle for Civil Liberties: Political Freedom and the Rule of Law in Britain, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119.

Subsequent attempts to introduce the bill fell by the wayside due to a lack of political support.¹⁹⁰ This section of the chapter will investigate the leading role played by the British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union in driving this campaign, charting their ideology, activities and ultimate failure to rouse the forces of public opinion in the fight against the socialist and proletarian schools.

Who were these unions and what did they stand for? The British Empire Union was the older of the two bodies, having been founded in 1915 as the Anti-German Union but changed its name a year later. The organisation was initially devoted to the cause of anti-alienism, advocating the internment of Germans living in Britain and calling on the public to deal only with those firms 'who pledge themselves to give preference to British made-goods'.¹⁹¹ The British Empire Union was but one component in a wider network of radical right groups, other bodies included the British Commonwealth Union and the British Workers' League, dedicated to the cause of interning enemy aliens during the First World War.¹⁹² After the cessation of hostilities in 1918, the union became preoccupied by the dual and interconnected threats of Bolshevism and indigenous socialism. According to K.D. Brown, the British Empire Union soon surpassed older bodies like the Anti-Socialist Union in terms of influence, mainly due to its superior financing, and promoted patriotism, social reform, preservation of the empire and industrial peace.¹⁹³ Specialising in a particularly raucous and forceful form of street politics, British Empire Union activists commonly disrupted and

¹⁹⁰ Gerrard, *Radical*, 89-90.

¹⁹¹ 'The British Empire Union', *The Times* (London), 24 Jun. 1916; For the activities of the British Empire Union during the war see P. Panayi, 'The British Empire Union in the First World War', in T. Kushner & K. Lunn (eds.), *The Politics of Marginality: Race, the Radical Right and Minorities in Twentieth Century Britain* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 1990), 113-131.

¹⁹² D. Thackeray, *Conservatism for the Democratic Age: Conservative Cultures and the Challenge of Mass Politics in Early Twentieth Century England* (Manchester, 2013), 123.

¹⁹³ K.D. Brown, 'The Anti-Socialist Union, 1908-49', in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1974), 255.

attacked the meetings of political opponents.¹⁹⁴ In 1921, for example, a police court in Marylebone heard of an incident where a socialist speaking at a meeting in Hyde Park had been privy to the excited shouting of a British Empire Union member named Captain Parsons, who was described as having given considerable offence to the large crowd present.¹⁹⁵ Refusing to obey the orders of the police, Parsons continued to bate the socialist speaker, subjecting himself to shouts and boos from the crowd, and was subsequently arrested.¹⁹⁶

The National Citizens' Union had rather different origins, being the successor group to the Middle Class Union. Established in 1919 to 'withstand the rapacity of the manual worker and the profiteer' and committed to defending bourgeois interests, the Middle Class Union, along with other organisations such as the Anti-Waste League, initially gave voice to disgruntled grassroots Conservative opinion angered by the inability of the coalition government to cut public expenditure and income tax levels.¹⁹⁷ Calling for an end to government waste and high taxes, the Middle Class Union supported strike breaking and sought to resist the growing prominence of organised labour at the national, municipal and industrial levels. As noted by J.N. Peters, the union's strength was derived from southern England with 115 out its 148 branches based in the area according to an April 1920 report in its newspaper *New Voice*.¹⁹⁸ Building on this observation, David Thackeray's work has demonstrated the popularity of anti-waste rhetoric in London and other southern English constituencies during the early 1920s.¹⁹⁹ In January 1922, the Middle Class Union changed its

¹⁹⁴ For this theme in relation to the radical right see Thackeray, *Conservatism*, 87-97.

¹⁹⁵ 'Scene at Hyde Park Meeting', *The Times* (London), 5 Nov. 1921.

¹⁹⁶ 'Scene at Hyde Park'.

¹⁹⁷ For the combative politics of anti-waste see M. Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924: The Beginning of Modern British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 55-59; E.H.H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 120-127.

¹⁹⁸ Peters, 'Anti-Socialism', 312.

¹⁹⁹ Thackeray, *Conservatism*, 155-160.

name to the National Citizens' Union in an effort to ward off assumptions that it was an explicitly class based organisation.²⁰⁰ In the declaration announcing this change, the general secretary of the Middle Class Union claimed that the organisation was primarily a defensive one but needed the support of 'moderate men and women of all social grades' in tackling the problems of the nation.²⁰¹ Retrenchment, economy, resistance to socialism, communism and nationalisation were defined as the guiding principles of the union.²⁰²

The British Empire Union was the first of the two organisations to highlight the dangers of the socialist and proletarian Sunday schools. It first mentioned the proletarian schools in its periodical, the *Empire Record*, in April 1920 and followed with another article the next month.²⁰³ In May 1921, a further piece appeared in the *Empire Record* denouncing the influence of Bolsheviks in proletarian Sunday schools.²⁰⁴ The article writer, Margaret Chorlton, asserted that socialist schools were regarded as useless by their proletarian counterparts as they taught love in place of class hatred and revolutionary fervour. She also pondered how the teachings of the proletarian schools could be allowed 'without bringing the law down upon the heads of those responsible'.²⁰⁵ Two months later in July, the union officially began its campaign against the socialist and proletarian schools, sending a deputation to the Bishop of London appealing for his support. The deputation informed the Bishop of the left's innate tendency to adopt extremist dogma and tactics if not confronted by patriotic forces.²⁰⁶ Referring to the examples of Ruskin College in Oxford and the Central Labour College in Kensington, the latter

²⁰⁰ 'Notes by the General Secretary of the NCU', *New Voice*, Jan. 1922.

²⁰¹ 'Notes by the General Secretary'

²⁰² 'Notes by the General Secretary'.

²⁰³ I. Thomas, 'Confronting the Challenge of Socialism: The British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union, 1917-1927', (M.Phil, Thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 2010), 27.

²⁰⁴ 'The Proletarian Schools: A Warning to Mothers', *The Empire Record*, May 1921.

²⁰⁵ 'The Proletarian Schools'.

²⁰⁶ 'Save the Children', *The Empire Record*, August 1921.

formed by 'certain extremists' who found the teachings of the former not 'sufficiently advanced', the deputation argued that the proletarian schools had been formed along similar lines as their proponents had deemed socialist teaching's to be 'insufficiently revolutionary'.²⁰⁷ Both types of schools, however, were active foot soldiers in the revolutionary movement. The *Empire Record* reported that the Bishop had been previously unaware of the schools, which he supposedly found 'devilish', and valued the cooperation of the British Empire Union.²⁰⁸ This claim of church endorsement for the efforts of the British Empire Union turned out to be largely false and will be explored later on in the chapter.

After the July deputation with the Bishop of London, the British Empire Union ramped up its efforts to expose the dual threats of the socialist and proletarian schools. In subsequent months, it claimed the support of prominent public school teachers, Horatio Bottomley's *John Bull*, various religious leaders such as Father Bernard Vaughan, P.T. Kirk R.J. Campbell, F.B. Meyer and Hudson Lyall, the conservative activist and president of the London branch of the Mothers Union.²⁰⁹ At its annual general meeting in October 1921, held in the Pillar Hall in London, Ernest Wild, the chairman of the union, spoke out against trade union tyranny and the 'pernicious attempts made in the socialist Sunday schools to instil discontent and sedition into the minds of children'.²¹⁰ In January 1922, the union issued a pamphlet called 'Danger Ahead', which sought to warn parents and public opinion about the 'injurious' doctrines taught to the young in socialist and proletarian schools.²¹¹ This pamphlet had in fact appeared

²⁰⁷ 'Save the Children'.

²⁰⁸ 'Save the Children'.

²⁰⁹ 'Helpers to Save the Children', *The Empire Record*, September 1921; 'The B.E.U. in the Press', *The Empire Record*, October 1921; 'Our Campaign Against Socialist and Proletarian Sunday Schools', *The Empire Record*, December 1921.

²¹⁰ 'The British Empire Union Annual Meeting', *The Empire Record*, October 1921.

²¹¹ R. Wilson, *Danger Ahead: Socialist and Proletarian Sunday Schools* (London: British Empire Union Research Department, 1922), 1.

before the war as part of the Anti-Socialist Union's efforts to publicise the activities of the socialist schools. Reginald Wilson, the general secretary of the British Empire Union, had merely updated the information in the pamphlet to include mentions of proletarian Sunday Schools. Indeed, its reappearance and the figure of Wilson indicate the continuity residing at the heart of much right-wing anti-socialism. 'Danger Ahead' spoke of the schools' menace to 'childlife' and 'democratic constitutional government'.²¹² In deliberate reference to the activism of the Edwardian period, Wilson went on to claim that the warnings about the socialist schools twenty years ago had fallen on deaf ears. The proletarian schools had been the disastrous result of this lack of action and it was high time 'for public opinion-to act'.²¹³ 'Danger Ahead' was one of the most successful of the union's publications, selling 19,500 copies in 1922 and had run to seven editions by 1925.²¹⁴

The National Citizens' Union joined the British Empire Union's crusade in April 1922. This development was instigated by J. Harry Moon, a member of the Marylebone branch and vice-president of the provincial London council.²¹⁵ Warnings about potential socialist and communist indoctrination of young minds had surfaced in the *New Voice* before this date. One article cited an incident where a Labour member had recently suggested writing a history of the October revolution 'written from the point of a view of a Bolshevik' while another attacked G.D.H. Cole for teaching the merits of so-called 'slave virtues' to children.²¹⁶ In a similar manner to the British Empire Union, the National Citizens' Union also actively sought the backing of religious leaders and implored its branches to cooperate with clergymen in

²¹² Wilson, *Danger*, 1.

²¹³ Wilson, *Danger*, 1.

²¹⁴ Thomas, 'Confronting the Challenge', 28.

²¹⁵ Reported in the June 1923 report of the Marylebone branch see 'Report of the Marylebone Branch', *The New Voice*, June 1923.

²¹⁶ 'Make the Schools Safe for the Children', *New Voice*, February 1922; 'Slave Virtues', *New Voice*, February 1922.

exposing. The Bishop of Birmingham, a member of the National Citizens' Union who spoke at its annual meeting in 1922, was certainly the most high-profile church leader associated with the radical right.²¹⁷

The British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union were the most active and vociferous supporters of Sir John Butcher's 'Seditious and Blasphemous Teachings Bill'. Crowded out in 1921 by the Labour Party, Butcher reintroduced the bill into the Commons in March 1923, after a decision made by Conservative politicians the previous month that some action needed to be taken on the subject of the schools, and it passed through the Lords on its third reading in August 1924.²¹⁸ The bill, which sought to ban any form of teaching that could be construed as seditious or blasphemous under existing law, was not 'to interfere with the teaching of socialist or other propaganda conducted on constitutional laws'. This aspect of the bill did not tally with the tendency of interwar conservatives to attack socialism and socialists as residing outside the pale of the constitution, ensuring that if the bill was ever enforced it was unlikely that socialist schools would not be targeted.²¹⁹ The British Empire Union called on its members and supporters to support the bill. A June 1922 report in the *Empire Record* declared that all 'interested should write a letter to their member of parliament, asking them to support the measure'.²²⁰ Launching a petition campaign in support of Butcher's proposed piece of legislation, the British Empire Union claimed to have gathered 7,012,143 signatures pledging their support in its annual report of 1924.²²¹ The union stressed the necessity of maintaining 'an active and continuous agitation'.²²² Members could do so by

²¹⁷ 'Men in the Movement', *New Voice*, March 1922.

²¹⁸ Gerrard, *Radical*, 66.

²¹⁹ For this tendency see R. McKibbin, *Parties and People: England, 1914-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 62.

²²⁰ 'Socialist and Communist Schools', *The Empire Record*, June 1922.

²²¹ Thomas, 'Confronting the Challenge', 29.

²²² 'The BEU Campaign', *The Empire Record*, June 1924.

keeping track of the names and address of schools in their area, visiting parents and drawing attention 'to pernicious doctrines', taking more interest in religious Sunday schools and keeping in touch with children educated in state schools.²²³

In tandem with the efforts of the British Empire Union, the National Citizens' Union began its own petition campaign. Starting at the behest of branches in Bournemouth, Islington, Kensington, East Fulham and Marylebone, members were entreated to petition clergy, ministers of religion and sympathetic politicians.²²⁴ The leadership of the National Citizens' Union urged branches to petition their local members of parliament. In February 1923, such efforts came to fruition when two Conservative politicians presented signed petitions from their constituents demanding urgent action on the schools' issue during a session of the Commons.²²⁵ At its annual general meeting in the same year, Lady Askwith, the vice-president of the National Citizens' Union and one of its most prominent public figures, declared that the 250 branches of the movement would get 'Sir John Butcher's bill' passed without delay.²²⁶

This objective was never realised as the bill failed to gain momentum after the Lords' decision to pass the bill in July 1924 by 102 votes to 20.²²⁷ The bill had little realistic chance of going anywhere with a Labour government in power but the indifference of the Conservative Party proved to be a far bigger obstacle. Some sections of Conservative opinion were undoubtedly sympathetic to the bill's objectives. The Lincoln habitation of the Primrose League called on the national council of the organisation 'to demand that the seditious and

²²³ 'The BEU Campaign'.

²²⁴ 'Red Sunday Schools: Progress of the Campaign', *New Voice*, November 1922.

²²⁵ 'House of Commons', *The Times* (London), 23 Feb. 1923.

²²⁶ 'Campaign against Communism', *The Times* (London), 3 Feb. 1923.

²²⁷ Gerrard, *Radical*, 89.

atheistic doctrines taught to children should be made illegal, and that such a ruling should be immediately forwarded to the prime minister'.²²⁸ At a local branch meeting of the Women's Unionist Organisation in 1922, a resolution was passed 'in favour of John Butchers Bill for the prevention of seditious teaching'.²²⁹ Such outright expressions of support were rare with most Conservatives preferring more positive forms of resistance to the socialist and communist schools. Efforts were channelled into youth groups such as the Young Britons, the Junior Imperial League and the Primrose League Juniors. Games, sports, songs, events, lantern lectures and patriotic festivals like Empire Day represented the best mediums for instilling in children the values of patriotism, in the process, preventing the next generation from being seduced on the factory floor by socialist and communist agitators. Conservatives also alluded to the important contributions of non-political organisations like the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides. At the Unionist National Conference of 1921, Dame Alice Godman, a member of the Women's Unionist Organisation, encouraged her colleagues to support the Scouts and Guides.²³⁰ They kept British youth 'patriotic, god-fearing and intelligent'. Similarly in 1924, a delegate at the Women's Unionist Conference implored her fellow members to get their children to join the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, organisations which venerated God, King, Empire and the Union Jack.²³¹ Indeed it is notable that the Boy Scouts, according to Allen Warren, ultimately 'refused closer association' with the British Empire Union after the First World War.²³²

²²⁸ 'Report of Lincoln Habitation', *Primrose League Gazette*, April 1922.

²²⁹ Report of Epsom Branch', *Home and Politics*, August 1922.

²³⁰ 'Unionist Policy', *The Times* (London), 19 Nov. 1921.

²³¹ 'Women's Unionist Conference', *Home and Politics*, June 1924.

²³² Warren, 'Citizens of the Empire', 243.

Conservatives also commented on the undoubted exaggerations residing at the heart of the campaign. A 1925 pamphlet entitled 'Socialist and other Sunday Schools' noted that while the schools were dangerous, there was 'no evidence to suggest that they were making any headway at the moment'.²³³ Religious leaders also espoused a similar line of analysis. At a May 1923 meeting of the convocation of Canterbury, one of the two synodical assemblies of the Anglican Church comprised of both bishops and clergy, a resolution was introduced calling for the attention of the national society to be 'drawn towards the rapid growth of proletarian Sunday schools'.²³⁴ One responder to the resolution argued that the numbers attending both schools were small and referred to the fact that the National Council of British Socialist Sunday Schools had 'admitted publicly, that the number of attendees' was steadily decreasing.²³⁵ These declining numbers compared rather shabbily to the '4,900,000 children attending religious Sunday schools in England and Wales'.²³⁶ In October 1924, the Dean of Bristol condemned right-wing attacks on the socialist Sunday schools and cited the convocation of the previous year where the whole matter 'was largely found to be a myth'.²³⁷

Just like their predecessors in the Edwardian period, the British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union could not depend on the support of the Church of England as a corporate body. The Mothers' Union again constituted the one notable exception to this trend as it assisted the political right in their agitation against the schools. In January 1922, it was decided at an executive committee meeting 'to allow the name of the Mothers' Union to appear as being in sympathy with the work of organisations like the British Empire Union'.²³⁸

²³³ National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, *Socialist and Other Sunday Schools* (London: National Union, 1925). 4.

²³⁴ Convocation, Province of Canterbury, 1923-1924, (*Chronicle of the Convocation of Canterbury*), 187.

²³⁵ Convocation, Province of Canterbury, 194.

²³⁶ Convocation, Province of Canterbury, 194.

²³⁷ 'Dean and Politics', *Western Daily Press* (Bristol), 28 Oct. 1924.

²³⁸ LPL: Mother's Union Executive Committee Minutes, 1/8, f. 22, 12 Jan. 1922.

In the same month, Hudson Lyall, the president of the London branch, wrote an article in the *Mothers' Union Journal* warning members of the dangers of Bolshevist atheism and disloyalty as promoted in the proletarian schools.²³⁹ She proceeded to implore 'all the loyal Christian mothers of England to defend your home and country from this accursed thing'.²⁴⁰ Lyall again spoke of the schools at a meeting of the Mothers' Union central council in June 1922, asserting that there were two possible solutions to the teachings of the 'anti-Christian schools'.²⁴¹ The first was to support the 'seditious and blasphemous teachings of children bill' and the second related solution encouraged mothers to watch out for the establishment of schools in their respective branch areas. Members were also implored, in a similar vein to the British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union, to lobby their local MP in support of the bill.²⁴² Some even reiterated the analysis of the radical right. A member of the St. Albans branch declared at a meeting of the Mothers' Union central council that the difference between socialist and proletarian schools was 'only one of degree' as 'one prepares for the other'.²⁴³

These politicised statements existed uneasily with the avowed non-party stance of the Mothers' Union. The leadership pointed out the 'extreme importance of using the title anti-Christian teaching in all work done....so as to avoid labels or party names'.²⁴⁴ Hudson Lyall asserted that the topic 'had nothing to with any party politics' as she only wished to speak on subjects which concerned 'Christianity and patriotism'.²⁴⁵ This announcement was rather disingenuous as the anti-socialism of the Mothers' Union was often quite blatant in the early 1920s. One contributor to the *Mothers' Union Workers Paper* wrote that socialism was not

²³⁹ 'Socialist Sunday Schools: A Warning', *Mothers' Union Journal*, January 1922.

²⁴⁰ 'Socialist Sunday Schools A Warning'.

²⁴¹ LPL: Mother's Union Central Council Minutes, 1/6, f. 92, 13 & 14 Jan. 1922.

²⁴² 'Seditious Teachings', *Mothers' Union Workers Paper*, June 1922.

²⁴³ LPL: Mother's Union Central Council Minutes, 1/6, fo. 179, 12 & 13 Jun. 1923.

²⁴⁴ LPL: Mother's Union Central Council Minutes, 1/6, fo. 93, 13 & 14 Jun. 1923.

²⁴⁵ Socialist Sunday Schools A Warning'.

attractive to the 'British mind' and 'could not flourish' in the country's soil.²⁴⁶ Britons were described as being 'individualistic' by temperament and those who regarded socialism favourably had simply not considered 'its logical consequences'. Another writer associated socialists with threats to home, motherhood and family life.²⁴⁷ Laying great stress on the hardships endured by women under the present system, they despised the tyranny of the 'unending round of work in the home'. Mothers' Union members were encouraged to cast their vote for politicians who 'upheld the sacredness of the family'.²⁴⁸

These critiques of socialism did not go unchallenged. A letter writer addressing the editor of the *Mothers' Union Workers Paper* decried those who conflated Bolshevik Communism with indigenous British socialism.²⁴⁹ The existence of Christian forms of socialism proved that the creed was compatible with religion, referencing the examples of the Christian Social Union and Canon Henry Scott Holland. Some protested that the work of the Mothers' Union was becoming too political, and sought to remind the leadership that the organisation was 'first and foremost a prayer union'.²⁵⁰ These dissenting voices did not have a decisive influence as the union continued to support the campaign against the socialist and proletarian schools.

The union possessed strong ideological affinities with Conservatism. Similar to the Mothers' Union, the literature of the Women's Unionist Organisation foregrounded the importance of domesticity, traditional gender roles and addressed women as consumers rather than producers.²⁵¹ These characteristics underpinned Conservative perceptions of

²⁴⁶ *The Enemy in Our Midst*, *Mothers' Union Workers Paper*, May 1922.

²⁴⁷ 'The Future of Family Life', *Mothers' Union Journal*, July 1921.

²⁴⁸ 'The Future of Family Life'.

²⁴⁹ 'Letters', *Mothers' Union Workers Paper*, June 1922.

²⁵⁰ 'Letters', *Mothers' Union Workers Paper*, March 1923.

²⁵¹ Thackeray, *Conservatism*, 143, 148; Berthezene, 'The middlebrow', 106, 108.

female voters as being instinctively anti-socialist in the interwar period, profoundly alienated by the 'beer and butt' culture of the Labour Party.²⁵² The damage done to home and family life by the Bolsheviks in Russia was also commonly cited in the propaganda of the Women's Unionist Organisation. One such article in *Home and Politics*, the organisation's magazine, delineated the logical consequences of socialist teaching through reference to the situation in the Soviet Union.²⁵³ The Bolsheviks removed children from parental care and banned all forms of religious instruction. This state-sponsored tyranny destroyed the moral and physical well-being of parents and children alike. Such depictions of the left were also observable in the literature of the Mothers' Union; a speaker at a 1922 conference remarked that 'the active principle of communism was one which worked towards destroying the home'.²⁵⁴ This process had already played out in Russia, according to the speaker, and 'the degradation of the whole nation' had been the ensuing result. The Mothers' Union also possessed close personal ties to Conservative groups. The October 1924 issue of *Home and Politics* contained an article written by a Mothers' Union and Women's Unionist Organisation member named Mrs Rhodes.²⁵⁵ Rhodes spoke of a Mothers' Union meeting she had recently attended where the topic of the socialist and proletarian schools was discussed. Bringing forward a resolution that called on the meeting to support 'the bill against seditious and blasphemous teaching', Rhodes remarked that many members of the Women's Unionist Organisation were also 'connected with the Mothers' Union'.

²⁵² D. Jarvis, 'Mrs Maggs and Betty: The Conservative Appeal to Women Voters in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5 (1994), 144-145.

²⁵³ 'The Child under Socialism', *Home and Politics*, October 1922.

²⁵⁴ 'Interdenominational Conference at Lincoln', *Mothers' Union Workers' Paper*, September 1912.

²⁵⁵ 'Mothers' and Communist Sunday Schools', *Home and Politics*, October 1924.

The Mothers' Union also had ideological resemblances with the radical right groups that organised the agitation against the schools. British Empire Union propaganda claimed that parents were not sufficiently aware of the danger that menaced the 'very existence of our nation and its Christian teaching'.²⁵⁶ National Citizens' Union member, Lady Martin-Harvey, the wife of the famous English actor Sir John Martin-Harvey, remarked at a Liverpool meeting that the 'red schools' were not teaching the 'things which really matter'.²⁵⁷ Patriotism, loyalty to 'the flag', love of God, and respect for the family life of Britain - these were the essential values young people should aspire to honour. Similar to the pre-war period, the aims of the radical right were also aided by the support of influential Mothers' Union leaders like Hudson Lyall, the president of the London branch. A prominent member, too, of the Women's Unionist Organisation, Lyall wrote pamphlets for the Conservative Party appealing for support from female voters and served as councillor for the Municipal Reform Party on the London County Council from 1919 to 1934.²⁵⁸ Throughout the 1920s, she was at the forefront of efforts to pass legislation that would ban communists from speaking in the capital's public parks. In 1925, Lyall's personal authority swayed the central council of the Mothers' Union to pass a resolution urging the home secretary and the chairman of the LCC to 'prohibit the sale of communistic and anti-Christian literature in the public parks' of London.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ 'Save the Children', *The Empire Record*, August 1921.

²⁵⁷ 'Lady Martin Hervey on Red Schools', *New Voice*, November 1923.

²⁵⁸ For examples of the pamphlets see H. Lyall, *The Vote and How to Use it* (London: National Union, 1922); *Why Women support Mr Baldwin* (London: National Union, 1923); for biographical information see C. Moyse, 'Lyall [née Rostron], Dame Beatrix Margaret'. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-52026> [accessed 10 August 2018].

²⁵⁹ LPL: Mother's Union Central Council Minutes, 1/7, fo. 127, 2 & 3 Dec. 1925.

The campaign against the socialist and proletarian schools lost momentum in the subsequent years after 1924. In 1927, the Conservative MP for West Ham Upton, Captain Holt brought the bill forward for its second reading in the commons.²⁶⁰ This was done without the explicit support of the British Empire Union, the National Citizens' Union or the Mothers' Union. The British Empire Union abandoned its anti-socialist/proletarian Sunday school activism in favour of an emphasis on the importance of Empire Day, which offered a more positive means of building political support. By 1926, the union's end of year review tellingly made no reference to the schools.²⁶¹ In the same year, the union commissioned the Royal Mint to make 30,000 Empire Day commemoration medals in the hope of distributing them to schools and hospitals across the nation.²⁶² The Mint subsequently refused to press any more Empire Day medals after Ramsay MacDonald got wind of the situation, and expressed his distaste for the propaganda of the British Empire Union.²⁶³ The National Citizens' Union began preparing for the looming threat of a general strike in the mid-1920s. Granted its wish in 1926, members of the union enrolled as volunteers, providing accommodation and modes of transport for those not on strike.²⁶⁴ Broadly supportive of the Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927, which outlawed sympathy strikes and mandated that trade unionists opt in to the Labour Party's political levy, the National Citizens' Union would draw closer to the fascist fringes of British politics in the 1930s.²⁶⁵ In the case of the Mothers' Union, there is no mention of the socialist/proletarian schools after the mid-1920s when leaflets were produced

²⁶⁰ HC Deb 11 March 1927, vol 203, cc1525-612.

https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1927/mar/11/seditious-and-blasphemous-teaching-to#S5CV0203P0_19270311_HOC_142 [accessed 12 May 2018].

²⁶¹ 'Review of the Year', *The Empire Record*, December 1926.

²⁶² English, 'Empire Day', 265.

²⁶³ English, 'Empire Day', 265.

²⁶⁴ Thomas, 'Confronting the Challenge', 95-96.

²⁶⁵ Thomas, 'Confronting the Challenge', 100-101.

to help members deal with the 'difficult problems' posed by 'anti-Christian propaganda'.²⁶⁶

The Mothers' Union's role in the campaign was largely reactive, relying on the initiative of other groups. Without the impetus of the radical right, perhaps also allied to the dying down of class conflict and industrial unrest after 1926, the socialist and proletarian schools no longer commanded the vastly disproportionate attention that had become a hallmark of their existence in the early twentieth century.

IV

The campaign ultimately ended in failure, hampered by an inability to convince public opinion that the schools were a pressing danger that needed to be expunged from British society. The miniscule number of schools actually in existence accounts for much of this apathy. Still, as demonstrated at the beginning of the chapter, the fears engendered by the existence of the schools were certainly real and reflected wider anxieties about the growing political influence of the Labour Party, rising levels of industrial unrest and the spectre of the international Communist menace. Conservatives founded youth organisations specifically to combat the perceived effects of the schools. The Primrose Juniors, the Junior Imperial League and the Young Britons were the largest political organisations for children and teenagers in early twentieth century Britain. The right also felt that non-political groups like the Boy Scouts and the Girls provided an effective bulwark against socialist and communist teachings. The campaign represented a more negative reaction to the existence of the schools. It was suffused by paranoiac tendencies that were a hallmark of the Conservative right throughout the twentieth century. The supposedly subversive intent of the schools echoed the tenor of older attacks on republicans, radicals and fenians. The campaign, in its earliest years, also

²⁶⁶ 'Anti-Christian Propaganda', *Mothers' Union Workers Paper*, September 1925.

experienced success in London, instigating a process that eventually ended in the uprooting of socialist Sunday schools from county council classrooms. The Municipal Reformers clearly paraded this decision in their political propaganda during subsequent elections. The campaign also clearly resonated with the Mothers' Union. The union's evident antipathy towards the schools was indicative of an ingrained anti-socialist outlook. This stance was of course questioned by those who felt that the union was violating its non-party principles but the influence of the leadership appears to have been decisive. The Mothers' Union, in terms of its politics, is best seen as a leading supporter of the Conservative Party in the interwar period. This support was not premised on a reluctance to speak about politics but rather emanated from overlapping ideological principles and personal networks.

Chapter Three: Rotary Clubs and the Politics of Anti-Socialism, 1918-1939

In his acclaimed 1922 novel *Babbitt* Sinclair Lewis famously satirised the worldview of the American middle-class businessman. The novel's lead character, the eponymous suburban real estate agent Joseph Babbitt, resides in the fictional Mid-Western city of Zenith; a place where vacuous materialism and social conformity constitute the dominant values. Babbitt is portrayed as an inveterate social climber who seeks to increase the volume of his real estate profits through membership of 'prosperity boosting' clubs.¹ Every 'decent man in Zenith', Babbitt explains to the reader, sought and attained membership of associations like the Rotarians, the Kiwanis, the Athletic Club and the Chambers of Commerce.² They acted as a social forum through which members could unite in support of the Republican Party and express disdain for the working classes, organised labour and socialism.

Lewis's observations about the political function of American middle-class associational life have been replicated for Britain in the important work of Ross McKibbin.³ McKibbin has asserted that from the end of the First World War middle-class Britain was mobilised by a deflationary political economy and a set of ideologically determined stereotypes which attacked the unionised working classes for their greed and malevolence. The electoral predominance of the interwar Conservative Party was achieved by 'creating a coalition of classes and interests united only by a normative hostility to a political notion of the working class'.⁴ Middle-class associational culture reinforced the political hegemony of

¹ S. Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: Harcourt, 1922), 199.

² Lewis, *Babbitt*, 199.

³ R. McKibbin, 'Class and Conventional Wisdom: The Conservative Party and the "Public" in Interwar Britain', in R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 228-258; *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), *Parties and People: England, 1914-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁴ McKibbin, 'Class and Conventional Wisdom', 292-293.

Conservatism by adhering to an apolitical form of sociability based upon depoliticised social relationships, the elimination of divisive religious and political discussions, and an emphasis on personal qualities such as niceness and humour.⁵ The non-political disposition of masonic lodges, suburban sports clubs, chambers of commerce and service organisations served to unite a formerly fragmented middle-class 'in opposition to local trade-union and co-operative societies.'⁶

Helen McCarthy has strongly challenged the work of McKibbin in a series of publications over the last decade.⁷ Utilising the records of the League of Nations Union, the British Legion, Women's Institutes and Rotary International, McCarthy rejects the argument that middle-class associational life was simply a vehicle for Conservative anti-socialism. Interwar voluntary associations helped to break down inequalities rooted in differences of class, religion and gender by fostering a culture of democratic inclusiveness and active citizenship. Their non-political ethos allowed men and women to 'participate in democratic politics without being required to invest in a partisan identity'.⁸ Far from merely aiding the Conservative Party, organisations like Rotary and the British Legion welcomed members with a broad array of political allegiances while the League of Nations Union and the National Federation of Women's Institutes often found themselves in conflict with local Conservative over their use of the non-party label.⁹ This acceptance of ideological diversity engendered a

⁵ McKibbin, *Classes*, 96.

⁶ McKibbin, *Classes*, 96.

⁷ H. McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), 891-912; 'Service Clubs, Citizenship and Equality: Gender Relations and Middle-Class Associations in Britain Between the Wars', *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), 531-552; 'Whose Democracy? Histories of British Political Culture Between the Wars', *Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), 221-238; 'Associational Voluntarism in Interwar Britain', in M. Hilton, J. McKay (eds.), *The Ages of Voluntarism: How we got to the Big Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47-68; *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c.1918-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁸ McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations', 911.

⁹ McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations', 902-907.

healthy respect for liberal democracy and helped to protect British political life from the extremes of Fascism and Communism.

The exchange between McKibbin and McCarthy brings into view wider debates about the political significance of voluntary action in modern British history. The vitality of associational life indelibly shaped Britain's reformist political culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A French study published in the 1870s calculated that a large majority of the country's adult population belonged on average to between five and six voluntary associations.¹⁰ The prevalence of trade unions, friendly societies, literary, scientific and philosophical societies, Sunday schools and charities was a reflection of a society where private and self-regulating social relationships loomed larger in everyday life than relationships determined by the organs of central government.¹¹ This national propensity for voluntary co-operation, which brought together groups of people 'to reform....social institutions', undoubtedly played a key role in insulating Britain from the revolutionary uprisings that rocked the continent during the nineteenth century.¹²

Scholars working within the Marxist tradition have generally equated the historical prominence of volunteering in Britain with the level of control exercised by the bourgeoisie in wider society.¹³ Through their control of temperance groups, literary societies, humanitarian organisations and charities, the middle classes, in the words of R.J. Morris, were 'able to assert their identity and authority against and over the working classes'.¹⁴ E.P. Thompson famously

¹⁰ J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain, 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 220.

¹¹ Harris, *Private Lives*, 220-221.

¹² Harris, *Private Lives*, 36.

¹³ For 'Social Control' as a concept used by historians see G.S. Jones, 'Class Expression versus Social Control? A Critique of Recent Trends in the History of Leisure', in *Languages of Class: Studies in Working Class History, 1832-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 76-89; S. Yeo, 'Ways of Seeing: Control and Leisure versus Class and Struggle', in E. Yeo and S. Yeo (ed.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), 128-154.

¹⁴ R.J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780-1850: An Analysis', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), 96.

criticised the Sunday school movement as an attempt by the middle-classes to enforce order and disciplinary measures upon working-class children. 'The pressure towards discipline and order extended from the...Sunday School...into every aspect of life: leisure, personal relationships, speech, manners'.¹⁵ Similarly, Theodore Koditschek has argued that the religious culture of voluntarism in eighteenth and nineteenth century Bradford was designed to meet the 'social and political needs of the emerging bourgeoisie'.¹⁶ Much of this scholarship re-affirmed the earlier criticisms of Marx who had singled out philanthropists, economists, humanitarians and temperance activists as exploitive agents 'desirous of redressing certain social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society'.¹⁷

The terms of this influential historiographical interpretation were strongly challenged by F.M.L. Thompson in his important 1981 review essay evaluating the approach of social control.¹⁸ Referencing the widespread usage of the concept by social historians of Victorian Britain, who sought to explain the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation, Thompson argued that such accounts too often relied on an overly polarised model of division where a 'masterful and scheming bourgeoisie' deceived and manipulated the working classes into support for the existing order.¹⁹ This interpretation rid the working classes of agency, discounting a creative ability to construct value systems and attitudes that were then transferred to middle-class institutions. Advocates of social control also gave too little consideration to the possibility that many nineteenth century social reformers and

¹⁵ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Vintage Books, 1963), 401.

¹⁶ T. Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban Industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 293.

¹⁷ K. Marx, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition* (London: Verso, 2012), 70.

¹⁸ F.M.L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *Economic History Review* (1981), 189-208.

¹⁹ Thompson, 'Social Control', 189.

philanthropists were themselves socialisers rather than controllers, circulating survival strategies in an ever-changing urban environment.²⁰

Brian Harrison's work also questioned the assumptions of social control, arguing that voluntary associations were never simply expressions of class interest.²¹ Adopting a framework indebted to Tocquevillian theory, which views civil associations as vehicles for democratic inclusion and participatory citizenship, Harrison asserted that support for causes like temperance, anti-slavery, philanthropy and children's education cut across the dominant class alignments of nineteenth-century-Britain. Class antagonism within these movements 'was either ephemeral or insignificant when seen against the long term-co-operation between members of all social classes which these movements inspired'.²² This spirit of collaboration helped to break down social barriers and provided an opportunity for previously excluded groups, like women, nonconformists and working-men, to become active in civic and public affairs.²³ The successful integration of these groups contributed to the relative stability of Britain's political institutions in an age racked by the social upheavals of industrialisation.²⁴ The belief that voluntary societies were forces for democratic expansion has also been a prominent theme in Frank Prochaska's work on the history of philanthropic endeavour.²⁵ Prochaska rejected arguments that portrayed philanthropy as a medium for middle-class social control, highlighting the substantial debt charitable organisations owed to working-class and female participants.²⁶ For these hitherto marginalised groups, charitable work

²⁰ Thompson, 'Social Control', 207.

²¹ B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); *Drink & the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (London: Faber, 1971).

²² Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 153.

²³ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 398.

²⁴ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 3.

²⁵ F. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London: Faber, 1988).

²⁶ Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse*, 27-28.

represented a 'nursery school of democracy' where opportunities for self-realisation, not available in the wider world, could be honed and developed.²⁷

Simon Gunn's more recent work on the public culture of the Victorian middle class highlights the ideological heterogeneity of voluntary life.²⁸ The urban environment of middle-class 'clubland' in cities like Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham could not be 'defined in simple political terms'.²⁹ It performed a plethora of functions and was characterised by an eclectic and often conflicting set of ideals, providing forums for rational discussion, upholding ranks of custom and status, and reflecting and refracting local political cultures. 'Clubland' never simply represented, as contemporary proponents liked to claim, a 'non-political sphere of bourgeois associations'.³⁰

The thesis that voluntary work was an important incubator of democratic values has been given added impetus in the last three decades by the re-emergence of scholarly interest in the concept of civil society.³¹ The decline of social-democracy, the retreat of the welfare state, the market liberating mechanisms of the Thatcher and Reagan Era and the influence of civil associations in toppling Communist regimes in Eastern Europe prompted many historians and political theorists to re-evaluate their faith in state-sponsored projects of material reform like socialism.³² The corollary of this diminution of belief was a renewed focus on social and

²⁷ Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse*, 30.

²⁸ S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

²⁹ Gunn, *The Public*, 100.

³⁰ Gunn, *The Public*, 100.

³¹ Within the British context see the collections of essays in the following works; J. Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History, Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); F. Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2000); J.A. Hall, F. Trentmann, *Civil Society: A Reader in History, Theory and Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). For political science literature see J. Keane (ed.), *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives* (London: Verso, 1988); J.L. Cohen, A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992).

³² For an excellent review of these trends see M.J.D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1786-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11-13.

economic institutions whose *raison d'être* lay in their independence from state structures. The work of Jurgen Habermas, whose defining study *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* was first translated into English in 1989 precipitating a large-scale intellectual engagement with the text on the part of Anglophone historians, and Ralf Dahrendorf has been particularly influential with both theorists identifying British historical development from the early eighteenth century as the archetypal pattern for a newly emerging form of civil society.³³ Habermas argued that the strength of non-state associations in Britain was one of the essential pre-conditions, along with the dominance of the market and the rise of 'public opinion' underlying the emergence of the 'bourgeois public sphere', a place where individuals came together to rationally debate matters of political and social importance.³⁴ Dahrendorf highlighted the historically diverging processes of middle-class formation in Britain and Germany.³⁵ The British nobility's decision to share political power with the middle-classes and the advance of commercial relationships created a space where associational life inculcated respect for the values of individualism, toleration and free-debate. This contrasted to Germany where institutions remained heavily dependent on state largesse, largely because of the aristocratic elite's failure to engage with other social groups. The ensuing underdevelopment of civil society accounted for the country's drift towards political authoritarianism in the 1930s.³⁶

The applicability of these idealised models to British historical experience has been robustly scrutinised by scholars; the work of Jose Harris has pointed to the existence of

³³ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press 1991), 57-67; R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), 53-54.

³⁴ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 14-27.

³⁵ Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy*, 54-55.

³⁶ Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy*, 365-380.

an indigenous Anglophone tradition of thinking about civil society which was only indirectly concerned with private voluntary associations.³⁷ In the same volume of essays, Brian Harrison also references the influence of this older ideological tradition, asserting that 'voluntarism and pluralism were civil society's consequence rather than its essence'.³⁸ Historians of British socialism have contributed to this intellectual renaissance. Challenging older historiographical accounts that associated socialism with state ownership and economic planning, newer research has focused on the beliefs and attitudes of pluralists, syndicalists, guild and ethical socialists who emphasised the necessity of a vibrant civil society, decentralised power structures and further democratisation of the political and economic system.³⁹

A recent wealth of scholarly literature has also attested to the major role non-party organisations played in promoting democratic values after the franchise extensions of 1918 and 1928. Groups like Women's Institutes, the Mothers Union, the Townswomen's Guilds, the Workers Educational Association, and the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts helped to advance the legitimacy of the post-war democratic settlement by attuning their members to the importance of active and participatory citizenship.⁴⁰ This didactic credo was given practical

³⁷ J. Harris, 'From Richard Hook to Harold Laski: Changing Perceptions of Civil Society in British Political Thought, late Sixteenth to early Twentieth Centuries', in J. Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History, Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 14.

³⁸ B. Harrison, 'Civil Society by Accident? Paradoxes of Voluntarism and Pluralism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century', in J. Harris (ed.), *Civil Society in British History, Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 96.

³⁹ See. L. Barrow, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); M. Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); P. Ackers & A. Reid (eds.), *Alternatives to State Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁴⁰ For Women's Institutes, the Mothers Union and the Townswomen's Guilds see C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 40-68; For the Guides and Scouts see T. M. Proctor, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002); For the Workers Educational Association see S.K. Roberts, (ed.), *A Ministry for Enthusiasm: Centenary Essays on the Workers Educational Association* (London: Pluto Press, 2003); L. Goldman, *Dons and Workers: Oxford and Adult Education Since 1850* (Oxford: Oxford

expression in the form of collaborative activities like study groups, tutorial classes, educational programmes and single-issues campaigns. The assumption that the Labour Party harboured an attitude of hostility towards the voluntary sector in the twentieth century has been re-evaluated in the studies of Abigail Beech, Justin Davis-Smith and Nicholas Deakin.⁴¹ For influential figures like Clement Attlee, R.H. Tawney and Arthur Greenwood, voluntary action, with its roots in self-help and mutuality, 'continued to be regarded as a vital means of expressing citizenship and of giving service to one's fellows'.⁴²

Much of this literature engages with a wider body of scholarship interested in challenging notions of voluntarist decline. The nineteenth and twentieth century expansion of the central state was once thought to have superseded the need for voluntarism, especially in areas related to the provision of social welfare. The work of Pat Thane and Geoffrey Finlayson has highlighted the key role non-statutory agencies played in the foundation and subsequent development of the welfare state.⁴³ Both scholars emphasise the continuing survival of a 'mixed economy of welfare' where state and non-state bodies worked together

University Press, 1995); 191-248; For wider discussions about the concept of active citizenship in the interwar period see J. Stapleton, *Englishness and the Study of Politics: The Social and Political Thought of Ernest Barker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); M. Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal-Anglican Theories of the State between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); B. Beaven, J. Griffiths, 'Creating the Exemplary Citizen: The Changing Notion of Citizenship in Britain, 1870-1939', *Contemporary British History*, 22 (2008), 203-225;

⁴¹ A. Beech 'The Labour Party and the Idea of Citizenship, c.1931-51, (PhD thesis, University of London, 1996); 'Forging a 'Nation of Participants': Political and Economic Planning in Labour's Britain', in A. Beech & R. Weight (eds.), *The Right to Belong: Citizenship and National Identity in Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 89-116; N. Deakin, J.D Smith, 'Labour, Charity and Voluntary Action: The Myth of Hostility', in M. Hilton, J. McKay (eds.), *The Ages of Voluntarism: How we got to the Big Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69-93.

⁴² Beech, 'The Labour Party', 219.

⁴³ G. Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994), 19-22; P. Thane, *The Foundations of the Welfare State* (Harlow: Longman, 1982), 160-162; H. McCarthy, P. Thane, 'The Politics of Association in Industrial Society', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22 (2011), 220; P. Thane, 'The Big State' versus the 'Big Society' in twentieth-century Britain', in C. Williams & A. Edwards (eds.), *The Art of the Possible: Politics and Governance in Modern British History, 1885-1997: essays in memory of Duncan Tanner* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 32-45.

to alleviate problems of poverty and destitution.⁴⁴ Contemporary political allusions to the importance of the 'Big Society', the work of Matthew Hilton and his fellow contributors at the University of Birmingham and the formation of the voluntary action society at the Institute of Historical Research have contributed to a substantial re-evaluation of voluntary decline.⁴⁵ Instead of simplistic notions of decline, scholars are now more likely to emphasise how the voluntary sector has 'constantly re-invented and revived itself in response to social and political change'.⁴⁶

The above historiographical review has considered some of the dominant approaches utilised by scholars when evaluating the political significance of voluntary action in modern British history. The first perspective recognises voluntary activity as a vehicle for middle class social control; voluntary associations reinforced class distinctions and helped to solidify the grip of political parties dedicated to the maintenance of the dominant social order. The second approach, Gunn's work providing one illustrative example, points to the political diversity of associational life and cautions against arguments that assign specific ideological viewpoints to civil society. The third perspective draws heavily from liberal theories of citizenship and portrays the voluntary sector as an important agent of democratic participation. This chapter contributes to these debates through a case study of the Rotary movement, covering the years between 1918 and 1939.

⁴⁴ For the origins of the 'mixed economy of welfare' see J. Innes, 'The "Mixed Economy of Welfare" in early modern England: assessments of the options from Hale to Malthus c.1683-1803', M. Daunton (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and the English Past* (London: U.C.L. Press, 1996), 139-180.

⁴⁵ M. Hilton, J. McKay (eds.), *The Ages of Voluntarism: How we got to the Big Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); M. Hilton, McKay, J.F. Mouhot (eds.), *The Politics of Expertise: How NGO's Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); M. Hilton, N.J. Crowson, J-F. Mouhot, J. McKay (eds.), *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁴⁶ M. Hilton, J. McKay, 'Introduction', in M. Hilton, J. McKay (eds.), *The Ages of Voluntarism: How we got to the Big Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

Founded as a businessman's luncheon club in Chicago in 1905 by the American lawyer Paul Harris, Rotary's activities were ostensibly guided by the ideal of public service.⁴⁷ It established its first presence in the British Isles in Dublin in 1911 and by 1939 boasted over 20,000 members and 453 branches.⁴⁸ Rotary's most distinctive feature was its strict system of membership classification which compelled every club to have only one representative from each trade or profession in a given locality. Strict eligibility requirements ensured that prospective candidates had to gain the nomination of a sitting one to be considered for membership. This restrictive model of membership, which also confined itself to men holding positions of executive authority within their firms, sought to ensure that Rotary possessed a wide representative basis. The strict avoidance of topics pertaining to politics and religion constituted one of the cornerstones of the Rotary ethic. The weekly club luncheon was depicted as a site of fellowship where the religious and political tensions of the wider world could be purposefully transcended.

This chapter examines the ideology, activism and membership structure of Rotary to illustrate a more outwardly positive model of anti-socialism. Rotary developed a progressive style of anti-socialism based around the principle of service and commonly expressed the pressing need to heal the divisions prompted by outbreaks of industrial unrest in the 1920s. This consensual style, however, existed in tandem with a more pugnacious form of activism that denounced the class-based selfishness of organised labour and harshly criticised the inability of wage earners to adjust to the responsibilities of mass democracy on their own

⁴⁷ Aside from the work of Helen McCarthy there has been very little scholarly research on Rotary. Victoria De Grazia has written about the role played by Rotary Clubs spreading American values in countries like Germany, Italy and France. See V. De-Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through twentieth century Europe* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); 15-75; For Rotary's influence in twentieth century America see J.A. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1993).

⁴⁸ Rotary International, *Proceedings book of the Thirtieth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Chicago, 1939), x.

terms. Both modes were responsible for shaping a dominant Rotary worldview that was anti-socialist, paternalist and largely accepting of existing economic and social inequalities.

Contrary to Ross McKibbin's arguments, as outlined on the first page of the chapter, Rotary's opposition to socialism was advanced in a subtle manner and was never simply reducible to an apolitical set of silent assumptions. This is not to suggest that the non-party label was unimportant to Rotarians but it was a dynamic rather than fixed category, utilised to discredit the claims of the political right as well as the left. The Rotary movement, unlike the Mothers' Union, refused to cooperate with groups like the British Empire Union and the Middle Class Union after some initial interaction, employing its non-party credentials to rationalise this decision. The chapter argues that Rotary clubs and members exhibited considerable interest in political and industrial affairs throughout the interwar period and articulated complex positions on issues like industrial relations and socialist ideology.

Making precise claims about the nature of Rotary's relationship to the interwar Conservative Party is difficult, certainly more so than in the case of the Mothers' Union in the previous chapter. Its reliance on the ethic of service was shared by leading Conservative politicians like Stanley Baldwin but this is not, in itself, sufficient evidence to make wider claims about Rotary's overall political slant. The motif of service possessed roots in Idealist philosophy and was utilised by thinkers and politicians in all of the major British political traditions in the early twentieth century. Conservatives, Liberals and Socialists could all draw upon the service ethic to justify their political aims. Unlike the example of the Mothers' Union, the chapter cannot pin a definitive political label on Rotary, Liberals, for example, held prominent positions in the upper echelons of the movement, but can confirm that it held anti-socialist views. In relation to wider debates about the political role of civil society, the chapter challenges arguments that emphasise the democratic and integrative function of middle-class

associational culture. Contrary to the assertions of Helen McCarthy, Rotary helped to sustain and reproduce existing class differences between the wars. This argument is developed through an investigation of Rotary's efforts to recruit working class members by adding trade union and cooperative society classifications in the 1920s. Through a detailed examination of the membership lists of the Bristol, Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield clubs, the chapter will show why this drive to enlist working-class Rotarians failed. It will also investigate the important ideological function performed by modes of sociability in Rotary clubs. Social activities like golf moulded bonds of fellowship between members and served to exclude prospective working-class candidates.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section investigates the progressive aspects of Rotary anti-socialism. The second, contrastingly, looks at a more negative and defensive variety. The third section examines the largely unsuccessful attempts to recruit working class members into the movement. Finally, the last section demonstrates the ideological significance of social activities like golf, rugby union and industrial visits.

I

Rotary envisioned itself as an organisation for a new type of businessman. The mission of Rotary, according to Belfast member Charles E. White, was to purify business life by removing the taints of individualism and self-interest.⁴⁹ The prevailing predominance of these values reflected the bitter inheritance of nineteenth century industrial life where buyer and seller had struggled for existence and businessmen were taught to be naturally suspicious of one another.⁵⁰ The spirit of extreme competition, as laid out by the economic programme of the Manchester school, was denounced by leading Rotarians as 'destructive, dishonest' and

⁴⁹ 'The Dream and Vision of Rotary', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1920.

⁵⁰ 'The Dream', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1920.

‘unworthy’ of civilised individuals living in the twentieth century.⁵¹ In stark contrast to the spirit of selfishness that had defined the terms of earlier economic relationships, Rotary clubs represented a space where businessmen could unite together in bonds of fellowship and service. The enlightened businessman residing at the core of Rotary’s vision rejected economic interest as his paramount motive for action, employing his commercial genius and experience to the aid of the common good. Such paeans about the duty of employers and their responsibilities towards the community were hardly an innovation of Rotary, having been a feature of the industrial paternalism that accompanied and influenced British economic growth in the middle-to-late decades of the nineteenth century.⁵² Patrick Joyce’s classic 1980 study *Work Society and Politics* demonstrated how ‘factory masters’ in northern industrial towns combined a rational economic logic with an articulation of social responsibility drawn from ‘feudal, or pseudo-feudal, ideals’.⁵³

Much of this high-minded Rotary rhetoric, especially its denunciation of old-style individualism and clear commitment to a corporate form of commercial identity, also echoed wider arguments being made in the business community in the aftermath of the First World War. The experience of war, where the government had assumed direct control of the transport, coal, armaments, iron and engineering industries, initiated a shift in business attitudes towards industrial organisation: staunch beliefs in the efficacy of competitive, small-scale firms gave way to a preference for the virtues of scale and rationalisation.⁵⁴ Drawing inspiration from American methods of mass production and from German systems of

⁵¹ ‘World Fellowship in Business’, *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1926.

⁵² P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 134-158; For another useful account of industrial paternalism see J.F. Wilson, *British Business History, 1720-1994* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 34-35.

⁵³ Joyce, *Work*, 138-139.

⁵⁴ M. Daunt, *Wealth and Welfare: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1851-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 115; D. Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 25.

industrial concentration, proponents of rationalisation argued that the structural re-organisation of industry into bigger firms would provide the basis for future economic prosperity and efficiency.⁵⁵ Support for the structural renovation of industry through methods of rationalisation chiefly emerged as a response to the endemic problems of the interwar British economy. The decline in the old export trades of coal, textiles, iron and steel, the related spike in unemployment figures, the problems of technological obsolescence in many sectors of industry and the loss of the world's leading creditor status to the United States combined to hamper the international competitiveness of British capitalism during the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁶

The war also brought new ideas to the fore about the future relationship of business, labour and the state. As part of its wartime policy of economic controls, the British government delegated the handling of material rationing and production quotas to newly formed trade associations and trade councils, representative of employers and employees, in an experimental system of industrial-self-government.⁵⁷ Ideas related to industrial self-government reached their apex of popularity within the business community with the formation of the Federation of British Industry (FBI) in 1916.⁵⁸ The FBI looked to the creation of a national system of Joint Industrial Councils (JIC's), a mediatory forum where employers and trade union officials could meet to discuss terms of collective bargaining agreements, as

⁵⁵ H. Gospel, *Markets, Firms and the Management of Labour in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 54.

⁵⁶ For overall accounts of Britain's economic performance between the wars see D.H. Aldcroft, *The Interwar Economy: Britain, 1919-1939* (New York: Columbia Press, 1970); S. Glynn, J. Oxborrow, *Interwar Britain: A Social and Economic History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976); 117-147; B. Eichengreen, 'The British economy between the wars', in R. Floud & P. Johnson (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain: Volume 2: Economic Maturity, 1860-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 314-343; For government finance in the 1930s see R. Middleton, 'British Monetary and Fiscal Policy in the 1930s', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 26 (2010), 414-441; For a more political approach see P. Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, The Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 58-79.

⁵⁷ Ritschel, *The Politics*, 13.

⁵⁸ Ritschel, *The Politics*, 26.

the basis for the reconstruction of post-war industrial relations.⁵⁹ Employer support for JIC's rested on the basis that they provided an alternative to state regulation of industrial relations, a sentiment also shared by many trade unionists.⁶⁰ The recommendations of the Whitley Report, which called for the establishment of JIC's in every industry where there was not existing industry-level bargaining machinery, were explicitly approved by the post-war coalition government and seventy-four such institutions, representing over two million workers, were established between 1918 and 1921.⁶¹ Proceeding pieces of legislation like the Trade Boards Act of 1918, which widened the conditions under which trade boards could be formed, and the Industrial Courts Act of 1919, which gave authority to the newly-instituted Ministry of Labour to intervene in industrial disputes, closely followed the logic of the Whitley Report.⁶²

Support for these schemes of industrial reconciliation faded in the wake of the coalition government's decision to push for rapid de-control of the economy.⁶³ Spurred on by the brief post-war boom, attributable to industrial re-stocking and deferred consumption, policy makers sought to return the British economy to pre-war patterns of 'normality' by cutting public spending, lowering taxation rates, restoring industries back to private ownership and de-pegging the sterling's exchange rate away from the dollar's.⁶⁴ This retreat to the familiar terrain of financial orthodoxy was further solidified by the onset of economic recession from mid-1920 onwards and the pressure exerted upon the government by the Anti-Waste League, an anti-tax and anti-communist political party who ousted a number of

⁵⁹ C. Howell, *Trade Unions and the State: The Construction of Industrial Relations Institutions in Britain, 1890-2000* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 71.

⁶⁰ Howell, *Trade Unions and the State*, 71.

⁶¹ Howell, *Trade Unions and the State*, 73.

⁶² Howell, *Trade Unions and the State*, 72.

⁶³ J. Lawrence, 'The First World War and its Aftermath', in P. Johnson (ed.), *Twentieth Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change* (London: Longman, 1994), 161.

⁶⁴ J. Lawrence, 'The First World War', 163.

coalition MP's from seats in the south east in the summer of 1921.⁶⁵ The resulting cuts in treasury expenditure ensured a drastic reduction in the numbers of government officials tasked with the study and promotion of JIC's and trade boards.⁶⁶ Whitleyism's appeal was also undermined by the resistance of unions and employers; many union leaders were sceptical of the effects of Junior Industrial Councils on long term patterns of organisations while employers remained wary of a scheme that encroached on managerial prerogative.⁶⁷

Where do we situate Rotary's 'new businessman' within these wider economic and social trends? Rotarians believed that they had a special duty to tackle the afflictions that bedevilled the relationship between capital and labour in the 1920s. 'No other subject' was as discussed in the weekly luncheon addresses of clubs than the 'baffling question' of employer-employee relations.⁶⁸ There was a general feeling among members like Harrogate-based George Wilkinson that employers should 'recognise the right of the labourer to bring up his family and make reasonable provisions for his old age'.⁶⁹ 'Too long had the working man been haunted by the spectre of want and the destitution of his offspring'.⁷⁰ These sentiments were shared by W.K. Bedingfield, a member of the Leicester Rotary Club, who argued that labourers should be entitled to a decent standard of living through the enactment of a national basic wage.⁷¹ The Newcastle Rotarian Angus Watson called for an end to unscrupulous

⁶⁵ For the politics of Anti-Waste see E.H.H Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 120-125; D. Thackeray, *Conservatism for the Democratic Age: Conservative Cultures and the Challenge of Mass Politics in Early Twentieth Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 154-158.

⁶⁶ R. Lowe, *Adjusting to Democracy: The Role of the Ministry of Labour in British Politics, 1916-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 77.

⁶⁷ Lowe, *Adjusting*, 93.

⁶⁸ 'Every Rotarian the Best Employer' *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1923.

⁶⁹ 'Social Unrest', Rotary's Opportunity, *The Rotary Wheel*, March 1919.

⁷⁰ 'Social Unrest', *The Rotary Wheel*, March 1919.

⁷¹ Leicestershire Record Office: Rotary Club of Leicester Scrapbook, 1918-1923, Rotarians & Labour Problems, *Leicester Mercury*, 14 April 1919, 21D69/13.

business practices which 'exploited the benefits of cheap labour'.⁷² The doctrines of Henry Ford had demonstrated that 'higher wages in industry could produce a motor car which is lower in price and for sheer service probably better in value than any other car'.⁷³

The recognition of the rights of labour to decent wages and a reputable standard of living marked a key component of Rotary's wider crusade to 'revolutionise' the terms of the employer-employee relationship along the lines of service.⁷⁴ Rotary ideology argued that capital and labour were both engaged in the provision of service to the public and the wider community. By rendering service, each section of the industrial divide would receive a reward in accordance with the value put on their service by the community.⁷⁵ The pursuit of monetary gain was assumed to be a noble one provided reward followed service in proper sequential order: the tendering of good service, by right, should result in the attainment of profits that were ethical and legitimate. Bad service, on the other hand, disregarded the basis of Rotary's wider spiritual mission and marked a continuation of earlier business practices that valued the accumulation of profit at any cost. Rotarians were also expected to extract service from their employees.⁷⁶ The public could not be wholly dependent on the service of an employer 'when there was an eternal possibility of a strike, or so long as prices may be kept exorbitant by continuing demands for higher wages'.⁷⁷ Such instances of industrial unrest would only cease when both masters and men recognised their 'joint relationship' as one of 'mutual service'.⁷⁸

⁷² 'Industrial Reconciliation', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1923.

⁷³ 'Industrial', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1923.

⁷⁴ R. Levy, *Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland: 'very nice gentlemen, really'*, (Plymouth: Continua Productions, 1978), 75.

⁷⁵ 'World Fellowship', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1926.

⁷⁶ 'World Fellowship', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1926.

⁷⁷ 'World Fellowship', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1926.

⁷⁸ 'Every Rotarian', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1923.

Rotary's belief in the righteousness of mutual service shared prominent affinities with the public doctrine of politicians like Stanley Baldwin. Acutely aware of the challenges posed by mass democracy and the rise of the Labour Party, Baldwin consciously invoked the spirit of service as a deliberate counterpoint to the materialism of class conflict.⁷⁹ Socialist ideology was attacked for 'teaching men that it was in their own interests to throw sand into the complicated machinery of industry'.⁸⁰ Such self-serving actions paralysed the economy and took away from those 'who direct industry that sense of security which is essential for initiation and for progress itself'.⁸¹ In Baldwin's schema, the performance of duties and responsibilities took precedence over misguided notions related to the rights of individuals and classes.⁸² An ideal of active service, which united people in duty to a communal whole, provided the core antidote to the 'alien imported plant' of 'class hatred'.⁸³ Baldwin's conception of industrial relations flowed logically from this sense of service: peace between the warring foes of industry and labour could only be assured when both sides recognised the debt of duty they owed to each other and to wider bodies of the community rooted in categories like the public and the nation.

Rotary and Baldwin both perceived service as the veritable motive force guiding the smooth operation of industrial relations. *The Rotary Wheel* confirmed these similarities in outlook when it published a speech made by Baldwin at Oxford in July 1923.⁸⁴ The speech, which was printed verbatim under the headline 'Prime Minister Voices Rotary Principles', heralded the freedom of English-speaking lands across the globe. The 'political and spiritual'

⁷⁹ P. Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 212-218.

⁸⁰ 'Mr Baldwin on Unity'.

⁸¹ 'Mr Baldwin on Unity'.

⁸² Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, 214.

⁸³ 'Mr Baldwin on Unity'.

⁸⁴ 'Prime Minister Voiced Rotary Principles, *The Rotary Wheel*, July 1923.

liberties of the Anglosphere, where the individual was responsible for his/her own actions, were posed in deliberate contrast to countries where the 'selfishness of the individual' had led to the gradual atrophying of national development.⁸⁵ Great Britain, the United States and the nations of the Empire were paragons of progress in the international community, intervening 'wherever justice calls us throughout the world and wherever there is peace to be ensured'.⁸⁶

Baldwin's consensual brand of conservatism, which aimed to re-create pre-industrial bonds of unity through tactics that emphasised the necessity of class-co-operation, certainly overlapped with key aspects of Rotary ideology. However, it is important not to push these links too far and we should refrain from broad-stroke assertions that identify Rotary as a non-party vehicle for Baldwinian Conservatism. Liberals occupied key positions of power within the movement; Vivian Carter, editor of the *Rotary Wheel* from 1924 to 1928, was a prominent liberal activist in southern England, serving as the chairman of the East Grinstead Liberal Association, the vice-president of the Free Trade Union and running as a candidate for local elections in the Kent constituency of Ashford.⁸⁷ Carter, a journalist by trade, was the leading British publicist of Rotary ideals during the 1920's, utilising a weekly column in the *Daily Telegraph* to promote the activities of the movement.⁸⁸ Manchester Rotarian William A. Nixon chaired committees at the local, provincial and national levels of Rotary and in 1935 became the director of Rotary International of Great Britain and Ireland.⁸⁹ Nixon combined this activism with political work for the Liberal Party, serving as the honorary treasurer of the

⁸⁵ 'Prime Minister', *The Rotary Wheel*, July 1923.

⁸⁶ 'Prime Minister', *The Rotary Wheel*, July 1923.

⁸⁷ 'Liberal Party Funds', *The Times* (London), 04 April 1925; 'Mr Carter', *The Times* (London), 24 February 1956; 'Blithe Spirit of Politics', *The Liberal Magazine*, March 1946.

⁸⁸ This series entitled 'Rotary Week by Week' was published in the *Telegraph* from 24 February 1927 to 7 July 1928.

⁸⁹ 'It Happened at Detroit', *The Rotarian*, July 1934.

Manchester Liberal Federation and running as a candidate in the city's 1930 municipal elections.⁹⁰ Liberalism's enduring appeal for many middle-class voters in the interwar period, albeit in decline in absolute terms and increasingly geographically restricted to areas in the so-called 'Celtic Fringe', was reflected in the upper echelons of the Rotary movement.⁹¹

Rotary's commitment to the ethic of service also bore traces of a liberal inheritance. The influential idealist T.H. Green, whose work arguably provided the philosophical foundations for the 'New Liberalism', argued that social service was the only means by which an individual could find true-realisation.⁹² This pursuit of self-development was to be realised in the state, which constituted the totality of the political community and a space where the individual found himself 'bound by ties analogous to those which bind him to his family'.⁹³ The Greenian vision eschewed materialism and sectional interests in favour of a society where individual action would be guided by the ideals of common self-purpose, active citizenship and class fellowship.⁹⁴ Green's theories, and the wider findings of the Idealist movement, were especially influential; inspiring the settlement movement of the late-nineteenth century, the adult-education initiatives of the Workers Educational Association and the welfare work of the National Council of Social Service. They also pervaded the writings of early-twentieth century social reformers 'generating a vocabulary of social reform that transcended political

⁹⁰ 'Mr W.A. Nixon', *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 August 1941.

⁹¹ For the persistence of middle-class liberalism in the interwar period see B. Doyle, 'Urban Liberalism and the "Lost Generation": Politics and Middle-Class Culture in Norwich, 1900-1935', *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), 617-634. For its decline see G.R. Searle, *The Liberal Party: Triumph and Disintegration, 1886-1929* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

⁹² M. Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, 230.

⁹³ T.H. Green, *Works of Thomas Hill Green: Volume II: Philosophical Works*, ed., R.A. Nettleship (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 436; on the state and individual self-development in Green's thought see P. P. Nicolson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists: Selected Studies* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 158

⁹⁴ Grimley, *Liberal Anglican*, 44; S. Den-Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation: A Study in Late Victorian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 158-159.

parties' and continued to influence much of the political theory and sociology taught in British universities.⁹⁵

Within the socialist tradition, the idealist conception of service found its most apt expression in the work of R.H Tawney. Tawney was an avowed opponent of materialism, criticising variants of socialism that emphasised collective ownership as the sole panacea for the problems of the industrial age.⁹⁶ Systems of syndicalist control or state-based ownership of the means of productions merely replicated the selfishness of capitalist individualism if they were not imbued with an ethic of service. In the ideal socialist society, the acquisition of wealth would be contingent on the 'discharge of social obligations, which sought to proportion remuneration to service and denied it to those by whom no service was performed'.⁹⁷ *The Rotary Wheel* extolled the moral force of Tawney's ideas in a review of his 1926 work *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.⁹⁸ The book traced the influence of Christian doctrine on business practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While recognising that the capitalist spirit had existed on a grand scale in Medieval Italy and France, Tawney criticised the Reformation and Puritanism for situating individualism at the heart of economic life.⁹⁹ This spiritual approval of free enterprise contrasted starkly to the actions of the medieval English church who had utilised theological sanctions to rein in the immoral practices of usury,

⁹⁵ J. Harris, 'Political Thought and the Welfare State, 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for Social Policy', *Past & Present*, 135 (1992), 138; Grimley, *Liberal Anglican*, 63; Jose Harris has written widely about the idealist influence in British academic and governing circles see in particular- J. Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 484-485; 'Platonism, positivism and Progressivism: aspects of British sociological thought in the early twentieth century' in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 343-360; 'Political Thought and the State', in S.J.D. Green & R.C. Whiting (eds.), *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15-28.

⁹⁶ L. Goldman, *The Life of R.H. Tawney: Socialism and History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 175.

⁹⁷ R.H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1920), 29.

⁹⁸ 'For Readers in Rotary: Business Ethics Historically Considered', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926.

⁹⁹ R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (London: John Murray, 1922), 6-8, 44, 54, 66.

the 'raising of prices by a monopolist' and the 'insistence on unreasonably good security for a loan'.¹⁰⁰ The Rotary reviewer commended the medieval church's ability to transfuse its moral authority upon economic life. Modern business glorified the attainment of material wealth at all costs and had turned its back on all forms of 'moral restraint'.¹⁰¹ Rotary, 'by encouraging and fostering high ethical standards in the business and professions', sought to insert its own code of moral ethics into modern economic relationships.¹⁰²

This belief in the beneficence of English medieval religion was indebted to prevailing religious and theological trends that emphasised the church's identity as a corporate, moral community. Perhaps best exhibited in the teachings of F.D. Maurice, the mid-nineteenth century pioneer of Christian Socialism, this branch of thought rejected the harsh, unforgiving doctrines of evangelical individualism in favour of an incarnational belief system that stressed the importance of social and material conditions on earth.¹⁰³ The mission of the church, acting as the living embodiment of God's will in the worldly sphere, was to denounce selfishness and materialism for the collective benefit of mankind. Tawney, writing fifty years after Maurice's death, carried on this legacy of corporate Anglican morality and evidently impressed the Rotary reviewer.

How was the ethos of service to be practically applied in the sphere of industrial relations? Rotarians were encouraged by their leaders to support proposals and organisations that promoted understanding between the competing claims of industry and labour. This approach owed a debt to pioneering figures like Sydney Pascall, president of R.I.B.I. for 1926-

¹⁰⁰ Tawney, *Religion*, 54.

¹⁰¹ 'For Readers in Rotary', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926.

¹⁰² 'For Readers in Rotary', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926.

¹⁰³ For an excellent account of Maurice's ideas see E.R. Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14-34; for evangelical ideas and their justification for capitalism in the nineteenth century see B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

1927 and managing director of the leading confectionary manufacturer James Pascall Ltd., who served as the first chairman of the association of Whitley Councils in 1917.¹⁰⁴ Pascall's devotion to the cause of industrial reconciliation also led him to chair the Employers' Consultative Committee of Trade Boards throughout the duration of the 1920s. A compulsive activist and man of strong religious principles, Pascall helped to found the Christian Order of Industry and Commerce, an organisation which promoted the application of Christian principles to business life, and was also an enterprising figure at gatherings of the Christian Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship.

While most members were not as steadfast in their activism as Pascall, there was strong approval of the work being done by Joint Industrial Councils in the pages of the *Rotary Wheel*. Whitleyism, in the opinion of Sheffield member S. Watts Smith, performed an important industrial function, allowing each side in a dispute 'to easily appreciate the legitimate desires of the other'.¹⁰⁵ The council's focus on deliberative discussion and mutual dialogue introduced an element of personal humanity into the proceedings governing the relationship between workers and employers. Both sides benefited from this emphasis 'on the personal touch' as it stimulated increased levels of 'confidence, humility and enthusiasm'.¹⁰⁶ A correspondent for the *Rotary Wheel* re-affirmed these views in an article written just before the outbreak of the General Strike in May 1926.¹⁰⁷ Rotarians were urged to treat employees as fellow workers and Joint Industrial Councils were cited as the best medium for facilitating 'friendly discussions between masters and men'.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Information for this paragraph comes from the article 'The New President of Rotary in Britain and Ireland', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926.

¹⁰⁵ 'The Aspirations of Labour', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1921.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Aspirations', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1921.

¹⁰⁷ 'Rotary and Business Practice', *The Rotary Wheel*, May 1926.

¹⁰⁸ 'Rotary', *The Rotary Wheel*, May 1926.

The merits of profit-sharing and co-partnership schemes in quelling bouts of industrial unrest were also a frequent topic of discussion at Rotary clubs. Profit-sharing, which has its roots in the Christian Socialist theory of economic co-operation, is an agreement between an employee and his/her employer in which a fixed share of the enterprise's profits are paid to employees, in addition to wages and salaries.¹⁰⁹ Labour co-partnership is an extension of profit-sharing and enables the labourer to accumulate a share of the profit in the capital of the enterprise that employs him/her.¹¹⁰ Experiments in profit sharing and co-partnership generally rose and fell with the tempo of industrial militancy and trade union expansion; the largest growth of such schemes coincided with periods of labour unrest, e.g. during the new unionism of the 1880s and the strike wave of 1911-1914.¹¹¹ Largely failures in terms of their execution, employers and unions generally preferred to solve disputes through mechanisms of arbitration and conciliation. R.A. Church has estimated that by 1912, out of schemes known to have existed at one time or another, no fewer than 163 had come to an end, and only 14 of the schemes then existing had a history of more than thirty years.¹¹²

The leading industrialist Lord Leverhulme was the most prominent advocate of labour co-partnership in early-twentieth-century Britain. Leverhulme, the founder of the soap conglomerate Lever Brothers, was acutely concerned with the improvement of working conditions in industry and in 1909 he established a comprehensive system of employees' co-partnership at the purpose-built Merseyside model suburb of Port Sunlight.¹¹³ In November

¹⁰⁹ R.A. Church, 'Profit-Sharing and Labour Relations in England in the Nineteenth Century', *International Review of Social History*, 16 (1971), 3; P. Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 149.

¹¹⁰ Church, 'Profit-Sharing', 3.

¹¹¹ Gurney, *Co-Operative Culture*, 150; E. Bristow, 'Profit-Sharing, Socialism and Labour Unrest', in K. D. Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London: Macmillan Press, 1974), 262-290.

¹¹² Church, 'Profit-Sharing' 13.

¹¹³ E. Hubbard, M. Shippobottom, *A Guide to Port Sunlight Village*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 4.

1922, Leverhulme spoke about the benefits of labour co-partnership at a meeting of the Bolton Rotary Club.¹¹⁴ In an era where the values of materialism and self-interest appeared to be predominant, the corporate culture of Lever Brothers was structured around sentiments of common understanding and beneficial reciprocity. The philosophy of shared ownership compelled employer, manager and employee to recognise the mutual services rendered to each other.

The leading proponent of profit-sharing and co-partnership within Rotary was a close associate of Leverhulme's. Ernest Walls, managing director at Lever Brothers from 1923 to 1928 and chairman of the Bristol soap-maker Christopher Thomas and Sons Ltd, was a prominent member of the Bristol Rotary club, serving as its president in 1922. In 1921, he published a book called *Progressive Co-partnership* which presented profit-sharing and labour-co-partnership as the sole remedies to the problems of the industrial sphere.¹¹⁵ Careful and considered modification of the capitalist system, effected through successful schemes of co-partnership, constituted the only possible alternative to the anarchical solutions proposed by Marxists and revolutionary syndicalist.¹¹⁶ The book was enthusiastically reviewed in the *Gearbox*, the official journal of Bristol Rotary, who commented on its 'rare penetrating insight into the human problems involved which are all too rare in the discussion of economic subjects'.¹¹⁷

Overt support for initiatives like JIC's and profit-sharing posed difficult questions for Rotarians. Any sort of intervention, even one which promoted the ostensibly neutral values of co-operation and mutual recognition, in the rancorous sphere of industrial relations was

¹¹⁴ 'Industrial Problems', *The Rotary Wheel*, November 1922.

¹¹⁵ E. Walls, *Progressive Co-partnership* (London: Nisbet, 1921).

¹¹⁶ Walls, *Progressive*, 2-7.

¹¹⁷ Bristol Record Office: Rotary Club of Bristol *Gearbox* Magazines, 1921, A Constructive Industrial Policy, *The Gearbox*, December 1921, 42730/IM/PM/1/3.

vulnerable to the accusation of politicking. The tense standoff's between union's and democratically-elected governments in events like 'Black Friday' and the General Strike provide a striking illustration of the politically-charged nature of labour relations in the 1920s. Leading figures like Sydney Pascall tried to circumvent the ambiguity of the Rotarian position by encouraging members interested in the work of 'joint bodies', by which he meant joint industrial councils, to act in an 'individual capacity'.¹¹⁸ As far as collective endeavour was concerned, Rotarians were encouraged to use their 'personal influence' in external organisations like trade associations.¹¹⁹

This course of independent action was explicitly approved by the Business Methods Committee. Founded in 1923 as part of a worldwide campaign, the committee consisted of eight leading British Rotarians tasked with 'inducing members to take a definite and public stance regarding right and wrong practices in business and professions'.¹²⁰ The committee, which counted Sydney Pascall and Ernest Walls as members, urged Rotarian's to secure the adoption of a code outlining the parameters of acceptable and unacceptable business practices in the various trades and professions they represented.¹²¹ Ernest Walls justified this measure by pointing to the example of the Institute of Journalists where a set of national rules had been formulated to regulate professional conduct.¹²² A resolution at the 1925 Blackpool conference highlighted why the adoption of such a code was felt to be so pressing: 'the critical conditions of British industry and the vast burden of unemployment' necessitated employers to 'obtain security for the workers such as that will enable them to co-operate wholeheartedly

¹¹⁸ 'A Message from the President', *The Rotary Wheel*, September 1926.

¹¹⁹ 'Editorial', *The Rotary Wheel*, May 1926.

¹²⁰ 'Modern Business and World Progress', *The Rotarian*, March 1922.

¹²¹ 'Every Rotarian', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1923; 'Rotary and Business Ideals', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1923.

¹²² 'Business Ethics and Ideals', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1923.

in making industry fully-serviceable'.¹²³ Resistance to the imposition of this code of acceptable business practices was palpable amongst members who felt that 'there was a national dislike in the minds of British men of business to codify a specific set of laws regarding their good conduct'.¹²⁴ Another common complaint centred on the code's supposed ignorance of the realities of business life; merchants and traders remained individualists by nature and could not, by virtue of this logic, submit their actions to competitors for judgment.¹²⁵ This groundswell of opposition, along with the disapproval of grassroots members who criticised the 'platitudinous appeals of the leadership', ensured that the code was never formally adopted by local clubs.¹²⁶

The chapter thus far has explored the relatively conciliatory attitudes displayed by Rotary towards the working-classes and organised labour. This rhetoric was far from ideologically neutral, harbouring a deep distaste for socialism and other ideologies, such as communism, that threatened to re-make the dominant social order. Rotary defined itself as a fellowship of businessmen 'who assumed the continuance of the existing order of society' and schemes for the promotion of peace between the classes were often couched in terms of stunting the appeal of 'bolshvist and socialist remedies'.¹²⁷ Despite the movement's professed acceptance of all types of political opinion, members sometime questioned whether socialists and communists were entitled to the privileges of membership. Cardiff member R.P.J. Richards wondered how it was possible for an organisation which believed in the efficacy of private profit to empathise with belief systems 'that were wedded to the idea

¹²³ Quote taken from the article 'Rotary and Industry', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926.

¹²⁴ 'Rotary and Business Practice', *The Rotary Wheel*, May 1926.

¹²⁵ 'World Fellowship', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1926.

¹²⁶ R. Levy, *Rotary International*, 75.

¹²⁷ 'World Fellowship', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1926; 'Business Ethics', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1923.

of abolishing capitalists'.¹²⁸ The Clapham club delegate C. Maney asserted in September 1926 that a Communist could never become a Rotarian because of the ideology's support for atheism and large-scale schemes of public ownership.¹²⁹

Rotary's fundamental acceptance of the status quo hindered its efforts to alleviate problems of a social and industrial nature. Service clubs, according to American writer Charles Marsden, failed to understand that individual cases of distress often had their roots in defective social conditions.¹³⁰ Marsden's observation sheds light on the wider limitations of Rotary's ambition to reform relations between capital and labour. Whilst members undoubtedly expressed sympathy for the plight of ordinary working-people, the movement's scope for manoeuvre was restricted by its middle-class outlook. Initiatives like the Business Methods Committee were hampered by the apathy and hostility of members; the reality of economic interest largely stymied efforts to imbue business practices with the spirit of service. The endorsement of JIC's and profit sharing, which valued personal relationships with the representatives of labour, could also suggest a more self-interested motive, reflecting the lingering appeal of paternalism to many Rotary members. Paternalism, which is roughly defined as a philosophy of social concern felt by the upper and middle-classes towards those considered less fortunate in life, had long permeated the activities of the voluntary sector and was often deployed as a means 'of upholding law and order and protecting property from attack'.¹³¹ One only needs to look at the consistent appraisal of profit-sharing by anti-socialists as proof of this latter tendency. 'The best answer to socialism', declared the industrialist Lord Mond when introducing employees' profit-sharing scheme in 1927 was 'to make every man a

¹²⁸ 'Representation of Trade Union Officials', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1931.

¹²⁹ 'No Politics No Religion', *The Rotary Wheel*, September 1926.

¹³⁰ C. Marsden, *Rotary and its Brothers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), 38.

¹³¹ Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare*, 100.

capitalist'.¹³² The chapter will now switch focus and examine the harder ideological edge of Rotary language.

II

On January 3, 1920, Lloyd Barnes, the president of the British Association of Rotary Clubs, addressed the weekly luncheon of the Brighton club.¹³³ Rotary's mission, Barnes declared, lay in suppressing the spirit of selfishness that resided at the core of the world's problems. The bitter legacy of the commercial selfishness of the eighteenth century, 'where great discoveries' were exploited by individuals for their own self-interested ends, was casting a long shadow over employer-employee relations in the immediate aftermath of the war. Barnes repeated this condemnation of the contemporary prevalence of selfishness when speaking to a combined gathering of the Nottingham, Leicester, Derby and Sheffield clubs in February 1920.¹³⁴ Soliciting the authority of historical precedent, Barnes compared the scale of state-intervention in the economy during the war with the eighteenth-century system of government control where businessmen 'were unable to exercise that spirit of enterprise which was so characteristic of the British race'. The lack of freedom afforded to businessmen in the eighteenth century was being replicated in present-day industrial disputes; 'intense selfishness' on the part of labour was hindering the operation of free enterprise and the wider post-war recovery of the British economy.

The idea that organised labour acted upon impulses of class-based 'selfishness' was one commonly expressed by Rotarians when analysing the intense social unrest of the 1920s. The charge of sectionalism was unfavourably compared to the spirit of sacrifice demonstrated

¹³² Quoted in M. Francis, *Ideas and Policies Under Labour, 1945-1951: Building a New Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 187.

¹³³ 'Gentleman the President', *The Rotary Wheel*, February 1920.

¹³⁴ 'Report of Derby Club', *The Rotary Wheel*, March 1920.

by soldiers of all classes on the battlefields of France and Belgium during the First World War. The Nottingham Rotarian H.T. Hayman contrasted 'the selfish and indolent' behaviour of strikers with the selfless nature of those 'who worked thoroughly and gave all' and whose essence now cried out to them from the 'the numerous war memorials that were being erected across the country'.¹³⁵ This condemnation of the supposed greediness of strikers was, of course, prominent throughout the war itself, often being linked to organised labour's lack of patriotism and related indifference towards the suffering of the nation as a collective.¹³⁶ Suffused by middle class anxieties and fears, this perspective was evidently observable in Rotary. Members like R.B. Johnson felt that labour and the working classes had reaped tangible benefits from the experience of war. Writing eight months prior to the cessation of hostilities in the *Daily Mail*, he proclaimed that the conflict had undoubtedly benefited labour as a class.¹³⁷ This was in stark contrast to owners of capital who had suffered 'very considerably' because of wartime depreciation of securities, income tax increases and rising excess duties on profits. The working man's four year 'sojourn on the continent' had broadened his mental horizons and instilled in him the idea that a new world was possible at the war's end.¹³⁸

This middle-class hostility lingered on in the immediate post-war years as a result of the increasing assertiveness of organised labour. This sense of precariousness can partly be attributed to economic reasons; there was certainly an appreciable loss of earnings in many middle-class families between 1919 and 1923.¹³⁹ It is important to note that income decline,

¹³⁵ Nottinghamshire Archives: Nottingham Rotary Club *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 7 January 1921, DD/2429/1/92.

¹³⁶ A. Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 208-212.

¹³⁷ 'Facts about Profits', *The Daily Mail* (London), 1 Mar. 1918.

¹³⁸ 'Social Unrest', *The Rotary Wheel*, March 1919.

¹³⁹ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 51.

while real, was unevenly distributed across the middle-classes as a whole; those who earned their living from business and ownership of property fared relatively well after the war, largely due to the growth in commercial profits, while the professional and clerical classes suffered tangible material losses as a result of their dependence on salaried forms of wealth.¹⁴⁰

The middle-class sense of 'crisis' in the early 1920's was captured most perceptibly in a contemporary sense by Charles Masterman in his classic examination of post-war English society, *England After War*. Utilising the London suburb of Richford as a case study, Masterman described the anti-labour attitudes of the middle-classes in the following terms:

Labour represents for it literally the figure of the Bolshevik of the cartoons, an unwashed, ill-dressed, truculent immigrant from the neighbouring labour cities; tearing up the tree-avenues of its streets, trampling on its flower beds, thrusting its clumsy feet through the bow-windows and aspidistra of its front drawing rooms.¹⁴¹

Groups like Lord Rothermere's Anti-Waste League attempted to exploit the anti-trade union bias of suburbs like Richford by rhetorically 'damning the laziness and idleness of the poor' and promising the 'cutting down of rates and taxes' to combat the inflationary impact of the war.¹⁴² Ross McKibbin, closely following the logic of Masterman's study, has characterised the early 1920's as a period where an anti-labour outlook became entrenched in the world-view of the bourgeoisie. These years saw the middle-classes identify themselves as 'the constitutional classes' and the 'public', both terms being constructed in direct opposition to

¹⁴⁰ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 51-55.

¹⁴¹ C. Masterman, *England after war; a study* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1922), 55.

¹⁴² Masterman, *England*, 56.

the claims of organised labour.¹⁴³ By defending the interests of the 'public' and the constitution, the Conservative Party quickly became the representative force of all forms of middle-class opinion. The most striking manifestation of this conflation of aims was the emergence of middle-class strike breaking in the 1920s, the only decade in which large numbers of people 'were prepared to defend the constitution in person'.¹⁴⁴

Were Rotarians politically mobilised by this brand of middle-class anti-socialism? Avowedly anti-trade union groups with intimate ties to the Conservative Party, such as the Middle-Class Union, the British Empire Union and the Economic League, closely courted the support of Rotary clubs. In the winter of 1920, the *Rotary Wheel* printed an article by Victor Fisher, member of the Economic League and founder of the self-styled 'patriotic labour' group the British Workers Party, entitled 'the Future of Industrial Relations'.¹⁴⁵ In the article, Fisher called on Rotarians to support the Economic League's programme of combating the 'temperament and mental outlook of the great masses of the wage earners'. Reginald Wilson's essay 'Trade Unionism Past and Present' was also published in the *Rotary Wheel*: Wilson, the secretary of the British Empire Union, implored Rotary members to support attempts to revise the Trades Disputes Act of 1906, which provided unions immunity from damages incurred during a strike.¹⁴⁶ Speakers organised by the Middle-Class Union and the British Empire Union were allowed to give the weekly luncheon addresses at Rotary clubs in Dublin, London, Leicester and Nottingham between 1919 and 1921.¹⁴⁷ Most of these addresses warned of the dangers of trade unionism and highlighted the suffering of middle-class families who were

¹⁴³ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 58.

¹⁴⁴ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 58.

¹⁴⁵ 'The Future of Industrial Relations', *The Rotary Wheel*, November 1920.

¹⁴⁶ 'Trade Unionism Past and Present', *The Rotary Wheel*, July 1921.

¹⁴⁷ 'Report of Dublin Club', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1920; 'Report of London Club', *The Rotary Wheel*, September 1921; LRO: LRC Scrapbook, 1918-1923, The New Poor: The Aims of the Middle-Class Union, *Leicester Mercury*, 14 April 1919, 21D69/13; NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 10 December 1920, DD/2429/1/92.

now being 'reduced to the ranks of the very poor'.¹⁴⁸ On the whole, Rotarians reacted negatively to these overtures; one member questioned how it was possible for a movement, whose efforts were centred on 'conciliation between capital and labour', to aid and abet a union dedicated to the preservation of middle-class interests.¹⁴⁹ Another wondered whether the tactics of groups like the British Empire Union, who engaged in an aggressive style of activism rooted in violent forms of street politics, could in any way be associated with the contented atmosphere of a Rotary club luncheon.¹⁵⁰ In January 1922, the British Association of Rotary Clubs acted on the issue by recommending that extreme measures be taken against those organisations that used 'the Rotary platform for purposes of political propaganda'.¹⁵¹

The example of the national railway strike of 1919 demonstrates that Rotarians proved themselves to be relatively ineffectual strike-breakers. The strike, which was initiated by the National Union of Railwaymen and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen over the coalition's government plan to reduce pay rates, lasted nine days and was eventually settled in the railwaymen's favour when the government agreed to maintain existing wage-levels.¹⁵² The government used intimidatory tactics against the strikers, rhetorically accusing them of mounting a war on the nation and the constitution.¹⁵³ It also re-imposed war-time rations on foodstuffs, announced plans to establish an emergency rail-network and called on owners of private cars to volunteer as strike-breakers.¹⁵⁴ Every one of

¹⁴⁸ Quoted taken from LRO: LRC Scrapbook, 1918-1923, The New Poor, *Leicester Mercury*, 14 April 1919, 21D69/13.

¹⁴⁹ 'Report of Gosport Branch', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1920.

¹⁵⁰ 'Report of Edinburgh Branch', *The Rotary Wheel*, September 1921.

¹⁵¹ 'The British Association of Rotary Clubs', *The Rotary Wheel*, February 1922.

¹⁵² For accounts of the strike see P.S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen: The History of the National Union of Railwaymen* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), 375-403; D. Howell, *Respectable Radicals: Studies in the Politics of Railway Trade Unionism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 223-233.

¹⁵³ L. Beers, "Is This Man an Anarchist?" Industrial Action and the Battle for Public Opinion in Interwar Britain', *The Journal of Modern History*, 82 (2010), 38.

¹⁵⁴ Beers, 'Is this Man', 39.

the twenty-five Rotary clubs in existence at the time offered official assistance to the government, for which they were later thanked by Lloyd George.¹⁵⁵ The Bristol club set up a stranded passenger bureau and ferried about 150 commuters' home using motorcycles and cars. At Bournemouth, a Rotary committee organised a 'motor trip to Sheffield for a number of Yorkshire people stranded without any other means of reaching home'. Such activity, as the November 1919 edition of the Rotary Magazine *Searchlight* noted with indignation, was the exception rather than the norm; over the course of the nine-day strike, only 'two or three clubs did anything at all'.

The right evidently struggled to convert the anti-labour sensibilities of Rotarians into gains of a political nature. What does this tell us about Rotary's relationship with party politics in the interwar period? Rotary clubs remained wary of appeals that were explicitly partisan in tone and rejected the advances of groups who engaged in raucous forms of street politics. Their evident commitment to the non-party label neutralised any overt identification with the politics of anti-socialism. This point is still broadly complimentary to McKibbin's thesis which identifies the non-partisan ethos of civil society as serving to cloak anti-socialism and support for Conservative Party. This privatised form of public opinion, which rejected crude propagandising in favour of restrained and deliberative styles of engagement, was idealised in the rhetoric of interwar politics.¹⁵⁶ As Jon Lawrence has argued, Britain's phlegmatic approach to political governance rested on a sober and essentially domesticated model of public

¹⁵⁵ Information about Rotary's reaction to the strike comes from Levy, *Rotary International*, 40-41.

¹⁵⁶ J. Lawrence, 'The Transformation of British Public Politics after the First World War', *Past & Present*, 190 (2006), 213; for an account of public opinion in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century see J. Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of 'Public Opinion', 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

opinion.¹⁵⁷ This contrasted to pre-war norms where an active and assertive citizenry was given license to disrupt political meetings and engage in low-levels of violence.¹⁵⁸

The anti-labour attitudes of Rotary members were undoubtedly rooted in wider middle-class perceptions of working-class behaviour. Working-men were thought to be particularly vulnerable to the false implorations of the 'professional agitator' who traded on the base elements of 'envy, greed and lust'.¹⁵⁹ G.E. Wilson Dickens, an anti-socialist trade unionist, warned Nottingham Rotarians in 1920 of the dangers posed by agitators in the labour movement.¹⁶⁰ He called on employers to come down off their pedestal and combat 'the wild statements being made by extremists to workers'. Employers could strike at the root of economic fallacies by alerting 'Dick Smith', a name used to personify the average worker, to some of the basic truths governing the laws of supply and demand. The belief that workers needed to be educated in the tenets of political economy was also held by the Newcastle Rotarian Walter S. Rolls.¹⁶¹ Rolls criticised leaders of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement for demanding that local Boards of Guardian's pay out increased levels of relief to unemployed men. These leaders, when confronted by Rolls, did not seem to realise that 'unprecedented calls for relief' would motivate employers, startled by the sight of demands for greatly increased rates, to look round for means of reducing their expenses. Workers would bear the ensuing costs of higher unemployment levels through the increase in the total sums demanded for relief.

A similar sense of class hierarchy, albeit springing from a different purpose and expressed in a far more benevolent tone, pervaded Rotary schemes designed to educate

¹⁵⁷ Lawrence, 'The Transformation', 213.

¹⁵⁸ Lawrence, 'The Transformation', 213.

¹⁵⁹ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 14 May 1920, DD/2429/1/92.

¹⁶⁰ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 02 July 1920, DD/2429/1/92.

¹⁶¹ 'On the Fringe of the Crowd', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1922.

workers in the responsibilities of citizenship. The Leicester and Nottingham clubs fostered the development of adult-education classes in their cities, working in close co-operation with the University Colleges and organisations like the Workers Educational Association (WEA). The Leicester Rotary club financially supported a weekly tutorial group coordinated by the WEA and in 1923 one of its members hatched a novel experiment in cross-class education.¹⁶² R.F. Rattray, Rotarian and president of University College Leicester, explored the idea of developing a series of educational classes, twenty-four in total and to be run under the auspices of the WEA, geared towards Rotary members and 'other persons in all ranks of society'.¹⁶³ These classes sought to combat the 'threatening shackles of class distinction' and were underpinned by a belief that education could 'bring about a common realisation of common ignorance's coupled with the endeavour to remove them'.

There is no surviving evidence to suggest that this educational experiment was ever implemented. Despite his pledge to thwart class distinctions, Rattray was notably sceptical about the abilities of working-men and women to adjust to the responsibilities of the franchise. The workers' penchant for desires of the lower nature, rooted in materialism and selfishness, meant that it was impossible to suppose that 'western civilisation' could survive with political and economic power in the hands of the 'present day average person'.¹⁶⁴ The radical expansion of university and adult-education, administered under the enlightened leadership of the middle-classes, provided the only means by which civilisation could be saved from an unparalleled disaster. The Nottingham educator Richard Peers re-iterated some of

¹⁶² For the WEA classes see the decision of the Leicester club's fraternity committee in December 1922, LRO: LRC, Council Minutes, 14 December 1922, 21D69/2.

¹⁶³ LRO: LRC Scrapbook, 1918-1923, Adult Education: Ambitious Proposal by City Rotarian, *Leicester Mercury*, 07 May 1923, 21D69/13.

¹⁶⁴ LRO: LRC Scrapbook, 1918-1923, The World Crisis: Education of the Masses the Solution, *Leicester Mercury*, 29 August 1921, 21D69/13.

these sentiments at a meeting of the city's Rotary club in 1921.¹⁶⁵ Franchise extension had made the call for education more insistent and it was the duty of middle-class educators to assist in the making of good citizens. The success of the university college in attracting students of proletarian origin was reflected in the contented 'demeanour' of the working-class movement in Nottingham.

The belief that the working-classes could not wield political power without proper education was shared by many sections of opinion during the interwar period. Conservative politicians like Stanley Baldwin worried about the prospects for the new polity; ill-informed voters, who had not 'yet had time to develop a keen political sense for themselves', would be especially prone to appeals based on class-selfishness and materialism.¹⁶⁶ Many Labour Party activists suspected that the mass electorate was woefully underprepared for the responsibilities of citizenship, being particularly susceptible to the prejudices of right-wing anti-socialist newspapers.¹⁶⁷ The suspicion of the corruptive influence of the popular press motivated strategists within the Labour Party to develop an innovative media strategy, based on new technologies like the wireless and newspapers like the *Daily Herald*, concerned with moulding public opinion along lines amenable to socialism.¹⁶⁸ Many of the fears shared by Labour and Conservative leaders in relation to the irrational nature of the democratic multitudes had been pre-empted in the pre-critiques of intellectuals like Graham Wallas. Wallas's 1908 *Human Nature in Politics* questioned the accuracy of enlightenment arguments which held that democratic citizens would be 'guided by reason in the use of their votes'.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 05 August 1921, DD/2429/1/92.

¹⁶⁶ S. Baldwin, *Our Inheritance* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), 30.

¹⁶⁷ L. Beers, *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 83-86.

¹⁶⁸ Beers, *Your Britain*, 85, 95, 125.

¹⁶⁹ G. Wallas, *Human Nature in Politics* (London: Constable, 1908), 170.

The real threat to representative democracy occurred when an over-powerful politician came to regard his constituents as 'purely irrational creatures of feeling and opinion'.¹⁷⁰ It was at this point that 'a resolute and able-bodied statesman may become most efficient and dangerous'.¹⁷¹

For many political commentators and historians, the 'infinite variety of voluntary associations' in British life provided a key safeguard against the hypothetical situation described by Wallas.¹⁷² These movements instructed the common people in democratic citizenship, preventing the rise of extremist currents disdainful of liberal democracy.¹⁷³ Support for authoritarian political movements like Fascism and Communism made little sense in an environment where civil society moulded new voters into an active and engaged citizenry. While not denying their role as pioneers of democratic education, it is important to note how voluntary organisations helped to sustain and re-enforce social hierarchies rooted in differences of class. In common with Rotary, middle-class hegemony existed at the heart of organisations like the Women's Institutes. The work of Margaret Andrews has demonstrated how the middle-class outlook of the Women's Institutes mitigated against working-class participation; women of the wage-earning classes were unable to take up positions of responsibilities *en masse* within the organisation because they neither had the time or money to manage without the help of domestic servants.¹⁷⁴ James Hinton's study of the Women's Voluntary Service, an organisation that was formally established with no system of rank, found

¹⁷⁰ Wallas, *Human Nature*, 174.

¹⁷¹ Wallas, *Human Nature*, 174.

¹⁷² S. Baldwin, *Service of Our Lives* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 164; for a similar perspective of a historian see McCarthy, 'Associational Voluntarism', 53-57.

¹⁷³ Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, 255.

¹⁷⁴ Margaret Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Institute as a Social Movement* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997), 63-74.

that 'the gulfs in everyday experience', which continued to divide housewives along class lines, 'were simply too great to be bridged in associational life'.¹⁷⁵

Rotary's sense of class-based superiority also borrowed heavily from discourses of expert 'knowledge'. The Foucauldian-inspired work of Patrick Joyce and Mary Poovey has alerted historians to the manner in which the nineteenth century growth of the central state was paralleled by the emergence of disciplinary agencies concerned with the control of groups and individuals.¹⁷⁶ City planners, statisticians, accountants, teachers, doctors, psychologists, criminologists, public intellectuals and engineers represented a 'community of like-minded experts' who established authority on the basis 'of social knowledge'.¹⁷⁷ Professionalised forms of knowledge began to permeate the state and civic sectors in the early years of the twentieth century.¹⁷⁸ The vogue for economic and social planning during the interwar era was illustrative of a new technocratic ideal where professionals positioned their expertise as having an independent basis apart from state and civil structures.¹⁷⁹ This professional and expert-driven approach coalesced with older amateur notions of the volunteer in organisations like the National Council of Social Service and Rotary.

The Birmingham Rotarian Charles A. Smith believed that trade unionists who fell back on the strike weapon as a means of settling industrial disputes were 'subject to the influence of the four winds of heaven and nothing else'.¹⁸⁰ The burden of drawing together employers and employee should fall upon those who 'possessed the advantage of education and first-hand knowledge'.¹⁸¹ Nottingham Rotarians were implored by their club magazine to equip

¹⁷⁵ J. Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 49.

¹⁷⁶ P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003); M. Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995).

¹⁷⁷ Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 96.

¹⁷⁸ Hilton, 'The Politics of Expertise', 8-9.

¹⁷⁹ Hilton, 'The Politics of Expertise', 8.

¹⁸⁰ 'A Wide Horizon', *The Rotary Wheel*, November 1920.

¹⁸¹ 'A Wide', *The Rotary Wheel*, November 1920.

themselves with the 'expert knowledge' needed to make contributions of real value to the problems of the labour world.¹⁸² How was this brand of expert knowledge to be attained? The careful study of facts would allow every Rotarian to become an authority on matters of a civic and political nature.¹⁸³ The Rotarian's knowledge of facts, underpinned by methods of reasoning, logical inference and objective assessment of the available evidence, empowered him to condemn the actions of the trade union agitator who acted upon the 'whims of prejudice and frenzy'.¹⁸⁴ This mode of 'scientific' study also allowed Rotary members to criticise 'the lethargic portion of the electorate', usually working-class in origin, who did not exercise their right of democratic suffrage.¹⁸⁵ In 1920, the public affairs committee of the Nottingham Rotary Club took out a full page advertisement in the local press attacking 'electors who did not trouble to use their vote'.¹⁸⁶ Every responsible citizen worthy of the suffrage was obliged to take assiduous interest 'in the management of city affairs'.

The idea that democracy was hampered by the inexact dispersion of knowledge was also shared by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS). The NCSS was founded in 1919 with the aim of extending co-operation between the state and non-statutory agencies in the sphere of social welfare.¹⁸⁷ The council also acted as a central co-ordinating body for the activities of the voluntary sector and is perhaps best known for its welfare work amongst the long-term unemployed in the 1930's. NCSS literature identified the 'lack of knowledge of the

¹⁸² NA: NRC *News and Notes* Leaflets for 1926, January 1926-December 1926, *News and Notes*, 25 August 1926, DD/2429/1/67.

¹⁸³ 'Rotary Obiter Dicta', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1920.

¹⁸⁴ Quoted in 'Rotary and Industry', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926.

¹⁸⁵ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 12 March 1920, DD/2429/1/92.

¹⁸⁶ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 29 October 1920, DD/2429/1/92.

¹⁸⁷ Thane, McCarthy, 'The Politics of Association', 219; M. Brasnett, *Voluntary Social Action: A History of the National Council of Social Service, 1919-1969* (London: National Council of Social Service, 1969).

facts of social situations' as one of the root weaknesses of modern democratic life.¹⁸⁸ Citizens, administrators and legislators were constantly being tasked with the burden of choosing between two political alternatives, 'neither of which they understood'.¹⁸⁹ The real task of politics was to present issues in such a way that people could 'vote upon them in an intelligent manner'.¹⁹⁰ A social survey, under the supervision of trained leadership, gave real meaning to modern democracy by 'enabling men and women to see their communities as a whole'.¹⁹¹ This co-operative inquiry into the problems of a local community was a valuable way of breaking down the barriers which divided men of goodwill; its findings were based upon the preservation of the 'scientific temper' and the application of objectively ascertained facts.¹⁹²

Rotary, often in close co-operation with bodies like the NCSS, carried out its own programme of social surveys in the 1930s.¹⁹³ Harold Crook, a Wesleyan minister and Rotary member, organised a social survey in the small Derbyshire town of Ripley and explained his reasons for doing so at a meeting of the town's Rotary club in December 1930.¹⁹⁴ Crook spoke about the existence of anomalies in the unemployment insurance system that allowed certain groups of people to claim relief and work at the same-time. A substantial proportion of the unemployed population 'were spending more than was desirable in pleasures and luxuries and denying themselves articles which were necessary for survival'. A detailed social survey of the Ripley area struck at the heart of such irregularities by calculating the exact number of people entitled to draw unemployment benefit. The introduction of a coupon system, 'where

¹⁸⁸ 'Sheffield', *Social Science Review*, September 1930.

¹⁸⁹ Sheffield', *Social Science Review*, September 1930.

¹⁹⁰ 'Sheffield', *Social Science Review*, September 1930.

¹⁹¹ 'Sheffield', *Social Science Review*, September 1930.

¹⁹² 'Sheffield', *Social Science Review*, September 1930.

¹⁹³ Rotary collaborated with the National Council of Social Service in places like Sheffield, Taunton and Gloucester. For Sheffield see 'Aim of the Scheme', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 18 February 1933; For Taunton see 'Social Survey of Taunton', *Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser*, 16 November 1932; For Gloucester see 'Social Service', *Gloucester Citizen*, 24 September 1932.

¹⁹⁴ 'Novel Ideas', *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald*, 20 September 1930.

money spent on doles could be exchanged for the necessities to sustain life', would provide a direct mechanism for control of working people's spending habits.

Social surveys also revealed the distance between Rotary members and the lived experiences of working-class life. In February 1939, Herbert Tout, the economist who directed the 1937 Bristol social survey, presented the findings of his research at a meeting of the city's Rotary club.¹⁹⁵ Tout spoke of the relative affluence of Bristol when compared to other cities of comparable size; nearly one-third of those included in the survey owned their own homes. The city's wealth was offset by a substantial degree of poverty, largely concentrated in its Eastern districts, and Tout's survey found that just over ten-percent of working families in Bristol were living in conditions of poverty. The weekly poverty threshold was roughly approximated at 30s for a man and wife and 50s for a man, wife and three children. Total weekly incomes that fell below these figures were officially defined as being in poverty. A Rotarian named A.E. Boyce caused 'a minor sensation' immediately following Tout's presentation when he declared that he and his family had been living on the minimum weekly level of money allocated for food expenses in the survey. Boyce, a land surveyor, presented his experience in terms approaching frivolity, exclaiming that he was glad to be at the present luncheon as 'it exempted him from one of the meals prepared at home'. The reaction to Boyce's intervention was one of humour and lack of seriousness, conveying the impression that Rotary members were largely divorced from the harsh realities of economic destitution.

The chapter has so far exclusively concentrated on the language of Rotary club members and their perception of trade unions, the working-class and socialism. The next

¹⁹⁵ 'Sidelights on Bristol's Survey', *Western Daily Press*, 28 February 1939.

section will give added support to the argument that Rotary helped to maintain existing class differences by focusing on the membership structures of local clubs

III

In 1925, Arthur Henderson delivered the key-note address at the national conference of British Rotary.¹⁹⁶ This was not the first time a leading figure within the labour movement had addressed an official Rotary event. In 1920, Ernest Bevin implored the weekly diners at the Bristol Rotary Club to imagine a world 'where transport would be organised in the interests of the whole country'.¹⁹⁷ British socialism, Ramsay MacDonald told the members of Liverpool's Rotary Club in 1925, was steadfastly committed to gradualist methods of political and economic reform.¹⁹⁸ This trend continued in the 1930s; a conference convened by the vocational service committee of Rotary International invited influential figures like Ben Tillett and Ellen Wilkinson to comment on the merits and drawbacks of industrial co-operation.¹⁹⁹ In 1935, Margaret Bondfield, the Labour MP and vice-president of the National Council of Social Service, asked Rotary clubs for help in finding work for the long-term unemployed.²⁰⁰

A certain degree of familiarity shaped the relationship between Rotary's leadership, local clubs and organised labour. Henderson's speech was unique in the intensity of opposition it provoked within the ranks of Rotary. Why was this so? The speech's contents were relatively mundane, calling for employers and workers to recognise the duty of service they owed to the community. This sentiment chimed with dominant Rotary assumptions about the function of

¹⁹⁶ Levy, *Rotary International*, 84.

¹⁹⁷ 'Bristol Club', *The Rotary Wheel*, July 1920.

¹⁹⁸ 'Political Notes' *The Times* (London), 15 September 1925.

¹⁹⁹ 'Industrial Co-Operation', *The Rotary Wheel*, February 1930.

²⁰⁰ Levy, *Rotary International*, 116.

the capital-labour relationship and as a result, would have seemed relatively innocuous to most members. The crux of the ensuing controversy lay in the belief that Rotary was compromising its non-party ethos by inviting prominent politicians to play a part in events like the national conference.

The first letter criticising Henderson's speech appeared in the *Rotary Wheel* in January 1926.²⁰¹ The letter writer, Frank Ray of the Kingston-upon-Thames club, questioned the wisdom of inviting party politicians to Rotary clubs and sarcastically queried whether the Conservative and Liberal leaders were to be summoned to address the national conference in following years. Rotarians were entitled to their political views, it was 'an essential of citizenship', but once they entered the club door 'their opinions were to be left on the outside'. Ray's arguments were challenged two months later in an article published in the *Rotary Wheel*.²⁰² The article, written under the pseudonym of 'Libertas', agreed that 'party politics and sectarian religion were to be excluded from the proceedings of clubs' but pondered whether this sanction should 'cover abstract propositions as to the future organisation of industry and society'. Political concepts were surely open for Rotarians to 'discuss just as they were for any other intelligent body of citizens'. 'Libertas' extended this logic to criticise those who sought to exclude trade unionists from Rotary. Trades unions were perceived by many sections of Rotary opinion to be political organisations because they levied member's subscriptions to finance the operations of the Labour Party. 'How was an organisation', which advocated conciliation between the classes, 'supposed to consider the views of the employed class if it systematically excluded them from its membership?'.

²⁰¹ 'Letters to the Editor', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1926.

²⁰² 'The Neutrality of Rotary', *The Rotary Wheel*, March 1926.

'Libertas's' intervention initiated a prolonged debate in the pages of the *Rotary Wheel* over the following couple of months. The balance of opinion supported the argument that the issue of the political levy should not prohibit trade unionists from joining Rotary clubs.²⁰³ This was the editorial stance of the *Rotary Wheel*, which declared that a trade union official was 'more than capable of not talking about politics within the confines of a club', and of influential leaders like Sydney Pascall who asserted that it was perfectly 'possible for a man pursuing the trade union vocation to be a good Rotarian'.²⁰⁴ Opposition predictably centred on the nature of the political levy, which 'undeniably made trade unions political bodies', and some members even equated the admission of trade union officials as being directly analogous to the acceptance of Liberal and Unionist club secretaries.²⁰⁵ Similar criticism was also extended to Rotary's relationship with bodies like the League of Nations Union; the movement's interest in foreign affairs was moving it 'very rapidly into the troubled waters of politics'.²⁰⁶

The row over the so-called 'trade union classification' never met a decisive end. In parallel with the decisions of the Business Methods Committee, Rotary's leadership largely delegated responsibility to local clubs over the matter. The trade-union classification was to stand open in the membership outline but clubs were not to be compelled by any central decree to 'go searching the highway for someone to fill it'.²⁰⁷ The degree of internal wrangling prompted by Henderson's speech offers up wider questions about the nature of Rotary's membership structure. What did Rotarian's mean when they referred to the term

²⁰³ See the correspondence in the letters section of the June 1926 edition of the *Rotary Wheel*, 'A Labour Classification', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926; see also 'Rotary's Opportunity to Foster Industrial Good-Will', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926; and the correspondence section in the September 1926 edition of the *Rotary Wheel*, 'A Labour Classification', *The Rotary Wheel*, September 1926.

²⁰⁴ 'Rotary and Labour', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1926; 'A Message from the President', *The Rotary Wheel*, September 1926.

²⁰⁵ 'Libertas and Neutrality', *The Rotary Wheel*, May 1926; 'The Neutrality of Rotary', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1926.

²⁰⁶ 'A Labour Classification', *The Rotary Wheel*, June 1926.

²⁰⁷ 'A Message', *The Rotary Wheel*, September 1926.

‘classification’? What sort of process did a prospective member have to go through in order to be considered for membership? Did clubs court or deter working class members? Did interwar Rotary sustain middle-class exclusivity or provide a forum for cross-class mixing and social mobility? The following couple of paragraphs seek to give an insight into some of these questions.

Any potential candidate for Rotary membership had to be proposed and seconded by existing members of the club.²⁰⁸ The proposer would then submit the candidate’s details, which included his name, profession and business address, to the club’s central council for consideration. If membership was approved by the council, the candidate’s name, address and profession would be advertised to other members, usually ‘by the notice calling the weekly or regular meeting of the club’, and any objection to the candidate’s membership was to be made no later than forty-eight hours after the meeting called by the notice. Barring no objections, the candidate was then duly elected to membership of a Rotary club.

Election to a club was considered an honour only bestowed on those displaying characteristics of exceptionality in their chosen field. Rotary membership was a guarantee of a man’s character, ‘a vote of confidence by a thoroughly representative body of his fellow citizens’.²⁰⁹ The quality of a club’s life depended on the value members placed on their election. Good membership etiquette involved attendance at the weekly luncheon, sending notice of absence whenever possible, swift payment of dues, displaying civility at all times towards fellow members, and being the best possible representative of one’s profession.²¹⁰ Bad etiquette was ascribed to behaviours like absence without notification, late arrival to the

²⁰⁸ Information from this paragraph comes from LRO: LRC Membership List, 1920, *Rules and Regulations of the Leicester Rotary Club*, 21D69/16B.

²⁰⁹ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, 1925, *News and Notes*, 16 July 1925, DD/2429/1/66.

²¹⁰ ‘Four Rotary Resolutions for 1920’, *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1920.

weekly luncheon, not 'having anything to say when called upon', non-payment of monies owed, and rampant egoism where a member believed that he 'was the powerplant of the universe'. These problems were all listed under the heading of 'How to Kill a Club' in the Nottingham Rotary magazine.²¹¹

Membership of a Rotary club was situated in the classification principle. Singleness of representation from each distinct business or profession gave clubs their unique basis. The occupations of Rotary members were defined in terms of 'classifications'. A prospective Rotary candidate could be offered membership, provided that his classification was firstly, vacant and awaiting representation, and secondly, had received the backing of the majority of members in a club.²¹² The 'singleness of classification' principle sought to ensure that Rotary represented 'a fairly accurate cross-section of the business and professional life of the entire community'.²¹³ Other arguments commonly made in favour of the limited classification model referred to its role in creating mutually beneficial economic relationships, usually alluded to under the guise of 'fellowship', and because it provided an ideal assembly, not restricted by a 'large and unwieldy membership', for the 'consideration and discussion of public affairs'.²¹⁴ This model was not without its critics: A Middlesbrough member questioned its applicability to towns where a large proportion of members derived their livelihoods from a small number of industries.²¹⁵ Proceeding to cite the example of his own home-town, the member went on to claim that he knew a number of businessmen of 'high character and executive position' who had been unable to apply for membership because their classification was already taken.

²¹¹ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, November 1917-May 1919, *News and Notes*, 'How to Kill a Club', 28 June 1918, DD/2429/1/91.

²¹² LRO: LRC, *Rules and Regulations of the Leicester Rotary Club*, 21D69/16B.

²¹³ Rotary International, *Proceedings: Eighteenth Annual Convention of Rotary International*, 165.

²¹⁴ 'Rotary Obiter', *The Rotary Wheel*, April 1920.

²¹⁵ 'The Limited Classification', *The Rotary Wheel*, May 1926.

The theory of single classification was indisputably biased 'towards centres where you have a diversity of manufacturers'. H. L. Mencken, the esteemed American journalist and cultural critic, expressed similar doubts about the validity of the classification model. In a review of a work called *The Philosophy of Rotary*, Mencken questioned the movement's response to a quandary where banking executives living in the same town were both seeking membership of the local Rotary club.²¹⁶ Mencken, whose literary output ridiculed Rotary on a regular basis throughout the 1920s and 1930s, highlighted the real-life example of a club in America who had resolved this dilemma by classifying one executive as a commercial banker and the other as a savings banker.

The clubs of British Rotary also dealt with the dilemma of over-lapping classifications. Bristol Rotary reacted in a similar fashion to the example cited by Mencken, classifying insurance brokers under the varying headings of accident, fire & sickness and life.²¹⁷ The system of classification used by the Leicester branch reflected the predominance of the hosiery industry in town. The club's membership directory for 1920 listed six hosiery manufacturers covered under classifications like underwear, cardigan, hose, and stockinet's, gloves and silk.²¹⁸ The tendency of Rotary clubs to skirt around the strictness of their classification model was also exhibited in efforts to recruit trade-unionists as members.

In December 1920, Bristol Rotary's trade union classification was filled by six officials representing specialised trades, like engineering and shipbuilding, and general interest bodies like the Workers Union.²¹⁹ The club made further efforts to enlist members of working-class

²¹⁶ H.L. Mencken, 'The Philosophy of Rotary', *The American Mercury*, 37 (1927), 379-380.

²¹⁷ BRO: RCB *Gearbox* Magazines, 1924, *The Gearbox*, Membership Directory, 1 July 1924, 42730/IM/PM/1/5.

²¹⁸ LRO: LRC Membership List, 1920, 21D69/16B.

²¹⁹ BRO: RCB *Gearbox* Magazines, 1920, *The Gearbox*, Membership Directory, 1 December 1920, 42730/IM/PM/1/2

origin by adding a co-operative society classification in 1924.²²⁰ Bristol's success in filling the trade-union classification was unusual when compared against the experiences of the three other clubs. In July 1925, the weekly notice of the Nottingham Rotary club alerted members to a list of vacant classifications.²²¹ Suitable nominations were needed for the occupations of builder, farmer, tyre manufacturer, estate agent and trade unionist. A membership list for 1927 appears to confirm that this search ended in vain as it makes no mention of a trade union classification.²²² The classifications of trade-unionist and co-operative society member are both conspicuous by their absences in the membership directories of the Sheffield and Leicester clubs.²²³

Was this trend characteristic of the Rotary movement during the interwar period? Bristol's desire to cater to working-class interests was also shared by other big-city clubs in London and Manchester. In September 1926, the weekly notice of the Nottingham club informed members that H.A. Leicester had been nominated as the representative of the trade union-classification in London Rotary.²²⁴ William A. Nixon, a trade-unionist for the accounting profession, became president of Manchester Rotary in 1926 and acted to vociferously promulgate the idea that every club 'should have amongst its members a trade union organiser or secretary'.²²⁵ The drive to make Rotary more representative of working-class opinion was a failure in absolute terms. Most clubs simply ignored appeals to diversify the basis of their membership as evidenced by a 1931 editorial in the *Rotary Wheel* which confirmed that there were only forty representatives of the trade-union classification in the

²²⁰ BRO: RCB *Gearbox*, 1924, Membership, 1 July 1924, 42730/IM/PM/1/5.

²²¹ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, 1925, *News and Notes*, 16 July 1925, DD/2429/1/66.

²²² NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, January 1927-May 1927, Membership Roster, 1927, DD/2429/1/68.

²²³ LRO: LRC Membership List, 1920, 21D69/16B; LRO: LRC Membership List, 1939, 21D69/17; For Sheffield see Sheffield City Archives: Sheffield Rotary Club Minute Book, July 1919- May 1928, Membership List, 1928, LD2076.

²²⁴ NA: NRC *News and Notes* Leaflets for 1926, January 1926-December 1926, *News and Notes*, 25 August 1926, DD/2429/1/67.

²²⁵ 'Industrial Co-Operation', *The Rotary Wheel*, February 1930.

entirety of British Rotary.²²⁶ This amounts to a relatively paltry number when one considers the total number of clubs in existence by 1931, 347 according to the calculations of the movement's international body, and the capacity for individual branches to have multiple numbers of working-class classifications.²²⁷ No similar data exists on the prevalence of co-operative society classifications.

A more detailed analysis of the membership lists of the Leicester, Nottingham, Bristol and Sheffield clubs confirms that interwar Rotary remained the preserve of the property-owning-middle-class. In Nottingham, Rotary represented a relatively broad spectrum of middle class interests that ranged from commercial classifications rooted in lace manufacture, which reflected the dominance of the industry in the city, to small business, such as jewellers, opticians, wholesale grocers and insurance salesman, and non-commercial occupations like university professor, religious minister, art curator and Young Men's Christian Association official.²²⁸ An analysis of the private addresses of Nottingham Rotary members demonstrates a heavy concentration in the wealthy outer-city suburbs of Mapperley Park, West Bridgford and Sherwood.

The success of the hosiery and boot-making industries in Leicester had transformed the city into one of the country's most prosperous areas during the interwar period. In 1936, the League of Nation's Bureau of Statistics identified Leicester as the second richest city in Europe.²²⁹ The pre-eminence of the boot-manufacturing and hosiery trades in the city's Rotary club were offset by a strong-petit bourgeois presence.²³⁰ The club's lower middle-class

²²⁶ 'Representation of Trade Union Officials', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1931.

²²⁷ Rotary International, *Proceedings: Twenty-Second Annual Convention of Rotary International*, 290-291.

²²⁸ NA: NRC Membership Roster, 1924, DD/2429/1/18; NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, 1927, Membership Roster, 1927, DD/2429/1/68.

²²⁹ P. Scott, *Triumph of the South: A Regional Economic History of Early Twentieth Century Britain* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007), 113.

²³⁰ LRO: LRC Membership List, 1920, 21D69/16B; LRO: LRC Membership List, 1939, 21D69/17.

influence was reflected in the preponderance of classifications like retail grocer, miller, dairyman and electrician. The 1920 classification of friendly society member constituted the only recognition of the non-propertied working-class in Leicester Rotary; by 1939 this classification was entirely absent from official membership lists of the club.

The 1934 membership directory for the Sheffield Rotary club contains no reference to any form of working-class classification.²³¹ The club appears to have had a strong lower-middle-class bias as evidenced by the negligible presence of steel manufacturers and the dominance of small traders. In common with Nottingham and Leicester, Bristol's Rotary club reflected the wider commercial success of the city. Bristol's relative economic wealth was derived from a diverse industrial base, with strengths in engineering, chemical production, and motor-car design. In 1924, the club had sixteen separate classifications corresponding to engineering trades, ranged under various headings like gas, marine, motor, locomotive etc., and four classifications relating to the chemical production industry.²³² The list also underlines the importance of light industry to Bristol's economic base with nineteen separate classifications allocated for clothing and leather manufacturing.

Rotary did not provide many opportunities for cross-class mixing in the interwar period. The membership of clubs remained dominated by middle-class property owners and attempts to broaden the basis of the organisation were largely hampered by attitudes of hostility and apathy. The next section will demonstrate how these conditions of inequality were replicated in the social activities of the movement.

²³¹ Sheffield City Archives: Sheffield Rotary Club Minute Book, July 1919-May 1928, Membership List, 1928, LD2076.

²³² BRO: RCB *Gearbox*, 1924, Membership, 1 July 1924, 42730/IM/PM/1/5.

IV

Frank Trentmann has written about the exclusionary role played by social activities in the life of voluntary associations. Contesting liberal arguments that invest associational life with *inherent* qualities of 'openness, reciprocity and equality', Trentmann argues that putting sociability at the centre of analysis allows historians to make sense of the prescriptive and often paternalistic dynamics of civil society.²³³ Civil society was an important site of social power, transmitting hierarchies in the private world to the public sphere. The next section will proceed in the vein of Trentmann's analysis and examine the importance of social pursuits like golf, rugby union and industrial visits to Rotary clubs.

Golf, Nottingham's club magazine declared in 1926, was a game that mirrored the trials and tribulations of life.²³⁴ Both were full of 'rules and maxims' designed to regulate the conduct of players and men. A sliced shot on the golf-course corresponded to the necessity of effort and trying again when failure ensued in the business world. Perseverance was to be coupled with competing 'in the right spirit' and not wasting time complaining when the 'ball stops on the lip of the hole'. The equation of business matters with a round of golf signifies the importance Rotarians placed on the sport. Members were described as being addicted to the sport, so much so that the Nottingham club notice in April 1925 contained a short section on golf's history, and during the trade union classification controversy a common complaint centred on the tendency of employers 'to take one or two half-days for their golf'.²³⁵ The medium of golf competitions provided opportunities for fellowship, mutual bonding and joviality; members would assemble at a central gathering place, drive out to the golf course in

²³³ F. Trentmann, 'Introduction', in F. Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17.

²³⁴ NA:NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, 1925, *News and Notes*, 14 October 1925, DD/2429/1/66.

²³⁵ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, 1925, *News and Notes*, 7 April 1925, DD/2429/1/66; Industrial Co-Operation', *The Rotary Wheel*, February 1930.

motorised convoys and play rounds of matches according to their various handicaps. Inter-club matches functioned as important modes of networking, allowing Rotarians from differing geographical locations to become acquainted with one another.

By the interwar period, golf had become the quintessential sporting expression of English middle-class life. The game had experienced stunning growth in the late-nineteenth century; England had possibly only a dozen clubs by the 1870s but by 1914 there were almost 1,200 clubs playing over 1,000 courses.²³⁶ John Lowerson has speculated that the English middle-class class importation of golf from Scotland, where it remained a cross-class pursuit, suited a number of late-Victorian needs. Concerned about physical activity and bound to stationary inertia by the needs of modern office life, golf provided an opportunity for exercise in the fresh air, offered several levels of competition and could be played at any age.²³⁷ The individualist potential of golf also helped to popularise it amongst the professional and commercial middle-classes; game often lasted up to three hours and success depended on the individual's objective assumptions, his knowledge of the golf course and the quality of equipment at his disposal.²³⁸

Ross McKibbin has argued that golf was central to the social networks of interwar businessmen. The clubhouse, usually located near a fashionable suburban settlement, was the locus of 'an easily satirised masculine style' which defined itself 'in aggressive opposition to the trade union movement'.²³⁹ The work of Mike Huggins and Jack Williams has also alluded to the exclusionary power exercised by interwar golf clubs. 'The social ambience of golf', along

²³⁶ J. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle-Classes, 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 125.

²³⁷ Lowerson, *Sport*, 127; J. Lowerson, 'Golf', in T. Mason (ed.), *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 188.

²³⁸ Lowerson, 'Golf', 189.

²³⁹ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 360.

with similar sports like tennis and rugby, expressed 'middle-class identities' and helped to stress 'the otherness of the working-class'.²⁴⁰ Rotary's pre-occupation with golf as a leisure pursuit corresponds to this outline of socially prohibitive behaviour. The game was undoubtedly an elitist form of sporting activity not readily available to those bound by the more pressing constraints of time and money. The length of time required to play eighteen holes, the average annual cost of playing on a course, and the related monies needed for the purchase of essential equipment like clubs put the sport outside the reach of most wage-earners. The relatively sedate atmosphere of a golf-club also stood in stark contrast to the 'rowdy' atmosphere of a football ground where values of partisanship shaped the excitable behaviours of players and spectators alike. Rotary's identification with golf was rarely posed in deliberate contrast to the working-class support for sports like football. The Rotarian love of golf functioned on a more ideologically oblique level, helping to solidify the ties of middle-class businessmen, providing opportunities for external commercial relationships to flourish and being symbolic of a hierarchical space where working-class people were indirectly excluded.

Bristol Rotarians were also firm proponents of the game of rugby union, stressing the dedication of its players during the First World War. A May 1920 article in the club's magazine declared that 'rugby football is one of the purest and best of sports' and made reference to the sight of the Bristol team, 'who joined up in a body', outside the Colston Hall recruiting centre at the beginning of the war.²⁴¹ The continuing health of the sport in the city was vital as it crafted dutiful citizens, patriotic soldiers and attentive entrepreneurs; 'the more the game is played the better it will be for nation in general and business men in particular'. Owing to

²⁴⁰ M. Huggins, J. Williams, *Sport and the English, 1918-1939* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 152.

²⁴¹ BRO: RCB *Gearbox* Magazines, 1920, *The Gearbox*, Sport in Peace and War, May 1920, 42730/IM/PM/1/2.

these benefits, the article called on local Rotarians to support the building of a new sports ground for the Bristol Rugby Club. It also revealed the close personal ties between Rotary and the city's rugby team. The sitting president of Bristol rugby, Frank N. Cowling, combined his sporting duties with membership of Rotary. This admiration for rugby union was not extended to football. A later article in the Bristol magazine described football as an offshoot of the former game and was condescendingly referred to as "soccer" in double inverted commas in one sentence.²⁴² The professionalism of football was outlined as one major reason for numbers attending rugby matches had declined in the immediate decades before the outbreak of the First World War.

This embrace of sporting activity did not go entirely unchallenged as some Bristol Rotarians felt it distanced their club from more pressing matters of public interest. In an August 1931 address, a past president of the club named W.T. Pearce, who incidentally had played scrum-half for the Bristol Rugby club in his early years, liberally quoted extracts from Andre Siegfried's book *England's Crisis*, particularly those that condemned the inordinate attention the general public paid to sporting activity.²⁴³ In this doom-laden work, Siegfried, a French economist, analysed Britain's sluggish economic growth and inability to solve problems associated with mass unemployment in areas reliant on heavy industry.²⁴⁴ Reserving an especial distaste for sport, Siegfried stated that this 'favourite pastime of the people.....reduced their preoccupations down to a level of childishness'.²⁴⁵ Commenting favourably on Siegfried's remarks, Pearce spoke of a recent conversation with a friend who had stated that 'if a future revolution in London clashed with a football match between Aston

²⁴² BRO: RCB *Gearbox* Magazines, 1920, *The Gearbox*, Our Indebtedness to Sport, May 1920, 42730/IM/PM/1/2.

²⁴³ BRO: RCB Press Cuttings, 1929-1934, The Obsession of Sport, 25 Aug. 1931, 42730/IM/H/1/7.

²⁴⁴ 5 sections of the book were serialised in the Times in March 1931. This section draws on these articles. On economic decline see 'M. Siegfried on England- II- Old Ways in Industry', *The Times* (London), 11 Mar. 1931.

²⁴⁵ M. Siegfried on England- III- The Insular Attitude', *The Times* (London), 11 Mar. 1931.

Villa and Chelsea it would be over in ten minutes'.²⁴⁶ The 'absurd obsession' of sport distracted Rotarians and members of the general public, taking the place of political and public issues that actually affected people's lives. Speaking a mere three days after Ramsay MacDonald's resignation as prime minister had triggered the collapse of the second Labour government, Pearce sounded his approval for a non-party government and advised Rotarians 'to face up to the facts and play the game for our country'.

The social activity of industrial visits also indicated the social distance that separated Rotarians from workers. Industrial visits were essentially organised tours, comprised of selected delegations from Rotary clubs, of sites like factories, mines, banks and offices. They represented the practical manifestation of Rotary's wider vision to be informed about all aspects of modern commercial and economic life. Trips abroad to North America were common. One such visit, organised under the auspices of Lord Leverhulme, was described in detail by a Bolton Rotarian named Charles A. Hays. Hays marvelled at the innovative techniques of mass production in the cotton mills he visited in Canada and the United States.²⁴⁷ Their ability to increase output at a rate not seen in Britain was prominently noted. The shift system in the North American mills meant that 116 hours a week were worked compared to the situation at home where 48 hours was the norm. Rotary clubs and members in Britain had much to learn from a system which regarded the welfare of the workers as a necessary investment. A November 1921 account of a Nottingham Rotarian's visit to America commented approvingly on the utilisation of new systems of industrial management.²⁴⁸ In relation to a boot factory, he remarked that all routine work had been mechanised, and items,

²⁴⁶ BRO: RCB Press Cuttings, 1929-1934, The Obsession of Sport, 25 August 1931, 42730/IM/H/1/7.

²⁴⁷ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 27 February 1920, DD/2429/1/92.

²⁴⁸ NA: NRC *News and Notes* leaflets, June 1919-December 1921, *News and Notes*, 4 November 1921, DD/2429/1/92.

which had previously taken three days to build, were now being produced in three hours. Managers and foremen were 'scientifically trained' in new business techniques which helped keep labour relations peaceful; non-union and union colleagues worked alongside each with little tension on the factory floor. Visits were also used to cement the ties of friendship between clubs.

Industrial visits were far from mere fact-finding missions, being infused with notions of class separation and distinction. The account of William Moffatt, a Leeds Rotarian, provides a vivid example of this tendency. In an article written for the *Rotary Wheel* in 1920, Moffatt described his recent visit to a local coal mine in South Yorkshire.²⁴⁹ Immediately revealing his unfamiliarity with the procedures and practices of a colliery at the beginning of the article, Moffatt notes that future visitors from Rotary should prepare themselves 'sartorially' and recounted the shedding of his normal attire of jacket, waistcoat, collar and shirt in favour of a nondescript garment of 'primitive design'. His eventual descent into the mine and encounter with colliers is indicative of a middle-class perspective unused to inhabiting working class environments. The foreignness of the experience to Moffatt is laid bare in sentence where he describes being in a mine cage as 'similar to the sensations of a person who is just about to go up in an aeroplane for the first time'. 'The speed of the descent is disorientating' and Moffatt commented that he wondered how his feet remained on the floor the entirety of the journey down. Although declaring his admiration for the miners, 'those imps of darkness that hack and hew and blast their way through the bowels of the earth', Moffatt's detachment from these men is clear, guided throughout his pit visit by management, and taking home a piece of coal as a souvenir of his trip. A firm believer in Rotary's mission to involve itself in

²⁴⁹ 'Down the Pit', *The Rotary Wheel*, January 1920.

finding solutions for the social and industrial problems of the interwar period, Moffatt believed that the merciless business ethics of the nineteenth century had to be jettisoned and cooperation with organised labour was declared a necessity.²⁵⁰ The spectres of unrest, revolution, and discontent threatened the masters of commerce and industry, and had produced the Bolsheviks in Russia and the Labour Party in Britain, both inspired by 'the same kind of general aspiration'.²⁵¹ To stop these forces becoming dominant, Rotary had to shape and change attitudes, influencing the 'modern world on straighter, sweeter, more merciful and more humanistic lines'.²⁵²

V

This chapter has used Rotary as a case study to explore a more positive model of anti-socialism, at least in an overall sense, than previous chapters. Rotary's commitment to the doctrine of service inspired its support for Joint Industrial Councils, 'Whitleyism' and profit-sharing schemes. Its espousal of these solutions to the problems of industrial unrest was never ideologically neutral. As employers of labour, Rotarians certainly had a self-interested motive in promoting the benefits of service as a resolution to industrial conflict. This would be only one side of the story, however, as many Rotary members and clubs truly believed that service could solve the problems of capital and labour, in the process placing industrial relations and society on a more harmonious path of cooperation and reciprocity. Both forms of logic could be being driven by an intrinsic anti-socialist rationale; one motivated by the purist motives of economic self-interest, the other inspired by idealistic impulses that nonetheless perceived socialism to be an ideology that ignored the ethical and moral benefits of capitalism and the

²⁵⁰ 'What is the Real Mission of Rotary', *The Rotarian*, January 1924.

²⁵¹ 'What is the Real Mission of Rotary'.

²⁵² 'What is the Real Mission of Rotary'.

pursuit of profit. These perspectives were buttressed by a conflictual one that emphasised the sectionalism of organised labour and wage earners, and proclaimed the necessity of paternalist education in the form of study classes and social surveys.

The often-yawning gap between Rotary idealism and the practicalities of day-to-day life in the clubs was illustrated by the debate over the trade union classification in the 1920s. Despite the concerted calls of the leadership, local clubs appear to have made only limited efforts to widen the social base of their movement. Rotary remained a bastion of the middle classes and this identity was merely reaffirmed by social activities like golf, rugby and industrial visits. Golf and rugby, though of course having considerable working-class followings in Scotland and Wales, constituted the prototypical sporting expressions of middle-class identity, and the latter, in particular, was felt to be morally superior to professional team sports like football.

Chapter Four: Popular Fiction and Anti-Socialism, 1900-1940

In the second part of his acclaimed 1937 work *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell provocatively claimed that the worst advertisement for socialism was its adherents.¹ Contrary to the myths of popular opinion, the stereotypical socialist was not an agitator of working-class origin with 'greasy overalls and a raucous voice'. Socialism 'in its developed form' was a theory almost exclusively confined to the middle classes, attracting youthful snob-Bolsheviks with an insatiable penchant for all things Russian and petit bourgeois white collar workers 'with a secret history of nonconformity and vegetarianism behind them'. The supposed predominance of 'cranks' in socialist movements was especially derided. Morally upright and magnetically drawn to alternative lifestyles, these 'sandal-wearing', 'fruit juice drinking', proponents of free love constituted a people out of touch with the needs and concerns of 'common humanity'. This sense of distance from the lives of ordinary men and women was heightened by the overt displays of intellectuality in socialist meetings and literature, 'which bore the worst stigmata of middle-class superiority'. Singling out Harold J. Laski, the Webb's and G.D.H. Cole, Orwell asserted that the dialect of the music-hall comedian was the closest possible approximation to an authentic proletarian literature in Britain, far more evocative than anything concocted by a 'book-trained' socialist writer.

Left-wing contemporaries of Orwell generally gave short shrift to the searing criticisms in this passage. Victor Gollancz wrote in the book's foreword that Orwell was subject to the same psychological inconsistencies as those he excoriated, being hamstrung by an inward desire to conform to the mental habits of his early upbringing and public-school education.²

¹ The quotes and information for this paragraph taken from G. Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (New York: First American edition: Harcourt & Brace, 1958), 205-207.

² V. Gollancz, 'Foreword', in Orwell, *The Road*, xvii-xviii.

The Communist leader Harry Pollitt accused Orwell of constructing a ‘mirage of false pictures and wrong conclusions’.³ His diatribe against ‘bearded fruit juice drinkers’ amounted to the actions of a disillusioned middle-class boy; ‘lemonade drinking’ ‘Bloomsbury types’ and pint-imbibing workers alike could find common cause in the ‘building of a new society’. Harold J. Laski singled out *Wigan Pier*’s theoretical inadequacy, particularly its misguided claim that socialism depended on ‘the right kind of clothes and the right kind of accent’.⁴ Subsequent scholarly evaluations of Orwell’s polemic have largely replicated the damning tone of these critics. The cultural theorist Richard Hoggart judged the attacks on middle-class socialists and the left-wing intelligentsia to be ‘confused, harsh and one-sided’.⁵ Raymond Williams, the Marxist critic and literary scholar, took Orwell to account for depicting class differences in terms of ‘snobberies in accent, clothes, tastes, furnishing, food’.⁶ Approaching this controversy from a different political perspective in 2006’s *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain*, Stefan Collini strongly criticised Orwell for openly adopting the guise of a disinterested observer, objectively spinning ‘ineliminable truths’ about the inauthenticity of intellectuals whilst deliberately positioning himself outside the upper-middle-class milieu he so clearly belonged to.⁷

Orwell’s philippic, while evidently baffling and maddening to many critics on the left, does provide a useful and well-known example of a critique more commonly associated with those on the political right. Conservatives commonly utilised ad hominem attacks targeting the personal behaviour, lifestyle choices and background of socialist politicians, usually middle

³ H. Pollitt, ‘Mr Orwell will have to try again’, *The Daily Worker*, 17 Mar. 1937.

⁴ H.J. Laski, ‘Review’, *Left News*, Mar. 1937.

⁵ R. Hoggart, ‘Introduction to *The Road to Wigan Pier*’, in R. Williams (ed.), *George Orwell: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974), 44.

⁶ R. Williams, *George Orwell* (New York: Columbia Press, 1981), 19.

⁷ S. Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 353.

class or aristocratic in terms of their social origins, to undermine left wing claims about the desirability of egalitarian goals and equitable political representation. The term 'champagne socialist', which signifies 'a person who espouses socialist ideals while enjoying a wealthy and luxurious lifestyle', is perhaps the most prominent manifestation of this tendency and replicates the polemical flavour of older cognates phrases such as 'drawing room and parlour socialist'.⁸ The substance of the argument, as one common scapegoat noted, lies in the claim that a person 'is dishonest if his public activities conflict with his private interests', a hypocrisy that ultimately lead to an invalidation of their opinions on matters pertaining to social inequalities and the redistribution of wealth.⁹ Socialists largely dismissed this reduction of politics to personal and private issues, deeming it to be of little relevance to their wider mission of reforming inequitable social structures that arose independently of individual morality and action. For the aristocratic Labour politician, Arthur Ponsoby, socialism relied on the input of people from all walks of life and was defined by a consistent set of 'principles, convictions and ideals'.¹⁰ 'A man's mind, not a man's position, is what counts'.¹¹

The left was not immune from using the tenor of the champagne socialist argument to bemoan the supposed betrayal of erstwhile political allies. Proponents of the 'aristocratic embrace' thesis, for example, argued that the fall of the second Labour government in 1931 could partially be attributed to the personal indiscretions of Ramsay MacDonald, Jimmy

⁸ For this definition of champagne socialist see the entry in *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'champagne socialist'. According to the *OED* and confirmed by a Google Ngram Viewer search, the term was first used in this sense by the American novelist George Cary Eggleston in his 1906 novel *Blind Alleys*. Digitised searches utilising the resources of British periodicals and various national newspapers show that the term first entered the popular political vernacular during the 1980s.

⁹ The common scapegoat here was Oswald Mosley who criticised the reductive logic of the argument in a letter written to the *Times* in January 1927. See 'To the Editor of the Times', *The Times* (London), 1 Jan. 1927.

¹⁰ A. Ponsoby, 'The Sad Case of the Millionaire Socialist', *The Graphic*, (April 1927), 97.

¹¹ Ponsoby, 'The Sad Case', 97.

Thomas and Philip Snowden in the 1920s.¹² Owing to the privileges they enjoyed as leaders of the Labour Party, MacDonald, Thomas and Snowden, the argument contended, had become separated from the movement they had previously represented with dignity, succumbing to 'the efforts of the higher classes to suborn them' and eventually adopting their attitudes, values, and styles of living.¹³ It is important to note that the features of aristocratic embrace were fluid and extended beyond mere condemnations of personal behaviour, incorporating participation in the public ceremonies of government, the wearing of court dress, and the acceptance of honours and titles.¹⁴

The existence of sentiments and viewpoints associated with the champagne socialist critique have received attention from historians of the Labour Party, especially in relation to trade union anxieties about the changing class character of the movement in the 1920s and 1930s, the related upward mobility of early Labour leaders and the embrace of 'affluent' lifestyles in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁵ Similarly, scholars of the early twentieth century right have explored the utilisation of personalised, anti-socialist character tropes in Conservative propaganda.¹⁶ This ideological strategy was subject to variance and multiple layers of characterisation; the stereotypical socialist activist was angry, pessimistic and associated with alternative ideals such as vegetarianism and pacifism; middle and upper class supporters of socialism, gendered in both female and male forms, were 'boring', 'priggish' and 'ineffectual',

¹² For the aristocratic embrace see N. Owen, 'MacDonald's Parties: The Labour Party and the 'Aristocratic Embrace', 1922–31', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18 (2007), 1–53.

¹³ Owen, 'The Labour Party', 2–3.

¹⁴ Owen, 'The Labour Party', 3.

¹⁵ M. Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party between the Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 43–44, 211; L. Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 38, 80.

¹⁶ D. Jarvis, Mrs Maggs and Betty: The Conservative Appeal to Women Voters in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5 (1994), 129–152; Jarvis 'British Conservatism and Class Politics in the 1920s', *English Historical Review*, 111 (1996), 59–84; S. Ball, *Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 62–65.

and often 'with an unspoken question mark over their sexuality'; the closely related left-wing intellectual was repudiated for being too 'clever for his own good', 'pontificating' on matters of abstract theory that possessed little if any relevance to 'the real world'; the proletarian trade unionist was predictably forthright and ultimately a coward who exploited the legitimate aspirations of working men.¹⁷

This chapter argues that these anti-socialist caricatures were never merely a feature confined to Conservative propaganda but circulated widely in British culture through the means of popular fiction in the early twentieth century. Two anti-socialist character archetypes became especially prominent during these years and will form the focus of the present chapter. The first archetype, the champagne socialist, was generally portrayed as naïve, overly intellectual, hypocritical, argumentative and unduly influenced by flights of fancy. Often a figure of comic relief, the ostensibly radical left-wing views of the champagne socialist were ultimately exposed as hollow and wholly predictable, a product of youthful idealism that faded with the wisdom of age. This fictive archetype openly mocked middle-and-upper-class-socialists, paying particular attention to their perceived pretensions and personal idiosyncrasies, and utilised the device of humour to convey a sense that socialism was marginal and outside the boundaries of polite conversation. The essentially comedic quality of this archetype should not be taken to mean that it had little serious political meaning or significance. As Matthew Flinders and Steven Fielding have noted, humour plays a key role in fiction and other forms of popular entertainment that explicitly tackle the subject of politics, serving as a healthy tool of constructive social criticism and often subjecting corrupt ruling authorities to legitimate ridicule.¹⁸ In this manner, then, it will be argued that the archetype

¹⁷ Ball, *Portrait*, 63-65; Jarvis, 'British Conservatism', 74-75.

¹⁸ M. Flinders, *Defending Politics: Why Democracy Matters in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University

of the champagne socialist performed an important ideological function, subverting the socialist focus on structural forms of inequality and helping, implicitly, to underpin perspectives supportive of the existing social and political order.

The second archetype examined in this chapter constituted a far more menacing proposition on the surface level. Serving the interests of dangerous foreign states and capable of whipping up the masses into a dangerous frenzy, the machinations of the socialist agitator were nevertheless generally foiled by the swift actions of patriotic and conservative heroes committed to the maintenance of the status quo. Crucially, authors who employed this trope tended not to demonise the indigenous working-class trade unionist or the Labour Party politician. Rather, the dominant emphasis in these fictions was to depict the socialist agitator as foreign and the working classes in broadly sympathetic terms. It will be argued here that harder forms of anti-socialist writing that attacked British trade union officials and Labour politicians as revolutionary agitators were atypical and in certain cases lacked popular appeal.

A mainstay of literary life in the Edwardian and interwar years, best-selling authors of the calibre of Agatha Christie, Marie Corelli, John Buchan, Somerset Maugham and Dorothy Sayers disseminated these character archetypes to millions of readers in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Focusing on the prevalence of these archetypes in popular fiction, this chapter will evaluate and challenge a number of key historiographical arguments relating to the nature of anti-socialism, middlebrow writing and conceptions of conservative modernity. The theme of anti-socialism in early-twentieth century popular fiction has certainly not escaped the attention of historians and literary scholars. In his landmark 1972

Press, 2012), 154-159; S. Fielding, *A State of Play: British Politics on Screen, Stage and Page, from Anthony Trollope to The Thick of It* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 17.

study of crime fiction, Julian Symons argued that the ‘values put forward’ by detective stories and spy thrillers were ‘those of a class in society who felt it had everything to lose by social change’, ignoring the General Strike, pretending trade unions didn’t exist and demonstrating little to no interest in the plight of the poor.¹⁹ Ross McKibbin’s well-known 1990 essay ‘Class and Conventional Wisdom’ contended that the immense popularity of Warwick Deeping’s middlebrow novel *Sorrell and Son* (1925) was indicative of wider middle-class social attitudes in the first half of the 1920s.²⁰ This book espoused the benefits of competitive individualism, denounced socialist egalitarianism, and castigated the working classes for their greed, envy and sullenness. Rosa Bracco’s work on interwar British middlebrow writing asserted that the form was infused by conservative meanings, associating socialism with ‘the disappearance of individualism, the ugliness of industrial development, and the political threat underlying manifestations of mass culture’.²¹

Alison Light’s important 1991 study *Forever England* argued that the interwar years witnessed the emergence of a distinctively middle-class, conservative form of modernity, rooted in the idylls of suburbia and domesticity.²² This era of conservative modernity, given foremost expression in the middlebrow writings of Agatha Christie, Daphne Du Maurier, Ivy Compton Burnett and Jan Struther, rejected the tampering advances of socialists and radicals, who sought to interfere with the conventions of home and family life, and was largely reticent

¹⁹ J. Symons, *Bloody Murder: from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (New York: Mysterious Press, 1992), 21, 96.

²⁰ R. McKibbin, ‘Class and Conventional Wisdom: The Conservative Party and the ‘Public’ in Inter-War Britain’, in R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 272-273.

²¹ R. Bracco, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War, 1919-1939* (Providence, Berg, 1993), 52.

²² A. Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991).

about political matters.²³ Light's conception of conservative modernity was strongly challenged by Ross McKibbin in his panoramic 1998 survey of British class cultures between 1914 and 1950. McKibbin proposes a more politicised definition of the middlebrow, asserting that Light 'exaggerates the middle-class retreat from politics' in the interwar period, and deems middlebrow fiction to be reflective of changing middle-class attitudes towards politics and the working classes shifting from a literature of conflict in the 1920s to a literature of modernity and social progress in the 1930s whilst remaining non-socialist and individualist.²⁴ *Sorrell and Son's* 'resentful', 'defensive' and anti-working-class mood giving way to the progressive, modern and reformist ethos of A.J. Cronin's best-selling 1937 novel *The Citadel*.²⁵ Crucially, *The Citadel* sympathises with the working classes but also claims that their existing cultural deficiencies means that they cannot be truly progressive, a mantle taken up by a new broad middle-class that provided the backbone for a 'confident and individualist democracy based upon notions of expertise and public engagement'.²⁶

Finally, it is important to note that McKibbin also positioned his work as a deliberate riposte to Daniel Le Mahieu, who argued in 1988's *A Culture for Democracy* that the maturation of newer technologies in the 1930s created mediums for shared collective experiences, citing the BBC's emergence as a truly national institution, the widespread popularity of authors like J.B. Priestley, the adoption of innovative graphical and visual techniques by national newspapers as key factors that helped create 'a common culture'.²⁷ Transcending the formerly rigid barriers of class, region and taste, this 'common culture' was

²³ Light, *Forever*, 107, 212.

²⁴ McKibbin, *Classes*, 483-485; quote at 484.

²⁵ McKibbin, *Classes*, 485.

²⁶ McKibbin, *Classes*, 68-69; 485.

²⁷ D.L. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 332-333.

not of especial benefit to any particular party or movement and appealed largely to emotions and feelings that superseded the 'controversies of the movement'.²⁸

This chapter engages with a broad range of popular fiction, with a noted focus on middlebrow literature and the detective, thriller, comedy and romance genres, to make a number of key historiographical claims. Firstly, the chapter contends that Ross McKibbin's argument that there was a fundamental shift in how middlebrow fiction depicted organised labour and the working classes in the 1920s and 1930s is overdrawn because he relies on the atypical novel *Sorrell and Son*. Rather, as referred to briefly above, both middlebrow and other forms of popular literature exhibited a tendency, across the period between 1900 and 1940, to attack foreign socialist and communist extremists and not the indigenous labour movement and the working classes. *Sorrell and Son's* stark picture of class antagonism and the dangers posed by the British labour movement were mirrored in a distinctive literary genre, that of the anti-socialist dystopia, which failed to find popular and commercial success. The chapter will include a short discussion of this genre in order to highlight the relative marginality of these more virulent forms of anti-socialism in early twentieth century British literary culture. The second key historiographical contention of the chapter is that Alison Light's conservative modernity thesis exaggerates the apolitical character of middlebrow fiction. Light's assertion that the dominant conservative outlook of the interwar years was based not on 'overt references to political ideologies' or a 'political outlook in the public sense' is mistaken.²⁹ Authors like Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers openly mocked what they saw as the

²⁸ LeMahieu, *A Culture*, 333.

²⁹ Light, *Forever*, 107, 212.

misjudged idealism of socialist beliefs and ultimately crafted literary visions that largely left existing social and political hierarchies untouched.

Finally, the chapter proposes a different historical chronology to the ones advanced by McKibbin and Light. The trope of the champagne socialist is widely encountered in popular fiction between 1900 and 1940 and is connected to a pervasive cultural and political sense that advocates of socialism, and later communism, were idealistic, ineffectual and often drawn from the privileged middle and upper classes. The stereotyping of the socialist agitator, by contrast, was subject to more flux. In the late-Victorian period, it was still acceptable for authors, most famously in George Gissing's 1886 novel *Demos*, to portray working-class socialist characters as debased and defective due to their social origins. The poor popular appeal of the anti-socialist dystopia in the Edwardian period shows that this form of anti-working-class stereotyping was in decline, perhaps because of the increased public and political prominence of the labour movement during these years. Indeed, the Labour Party's demonstrable respect for the constitution, parliament and the existing political system as a whole meant that attacks relating to its revolutionary potential often fell on deaf ears. The perception that the working classes had selflessly sacrificed their lives on the battlefields of Europe in the First World War for the good of the British nation also helped to impart a belief that they were fundamentally patriotic, worthy of empathy and not threatening if left undisturbed by revolutionary extremists.

This trend continued in interwar middlebrow literary culture with outright condemnation being reserved for Bolsheviks and their indigenous lackeys. The compassionate portrayal of the problems faced by Welsh miners in A.J. Cronin's *The Citadel*, therefore, did not mark a contrast with earlier forms of middlebrow fiction and merely reiterated a stance

of empathy also visible in the 1920s. A consensus concerning the fundamental decency of the labouring masses had become firmly entrenched in British literature by the end of the 1930s and was an important component part of the 'common culture' identified by Le Mahieu in this decade. The harmonious and peaceable vision of Britain depicted in popular fiction was never apolitical and saw little need for the root-and-branch reforms demanded by the various ideologies of socialism.

The chapter will be divided into three sections. The first provides a brief outline of the popular reading market and the key features of the middlebrow literary culture of the interwar years as means of introducing the reader to some of the key terms and concepts utilised throughout the chapter. The second section examines the champagne socialist character archetype in popular fiction between 1900 and 1940. The third section investigates the corresponding socialist agitator archetype.

I

The consumption of fiction increased markedly in the four decades between 1900 and 1940 because of the near-total eradication of illiteracy, the growth of public and commercial lending libraries, the replacement of the triple decker volume by the single six-shilling book, and the emergence of cheaply priced paperback editions. Reading became a 'popular and regular form of mass entertainment to be enjoyed at home, or work, or on the prom'.³⁰ This was also an era in which a number of important American literary innovations began to take hold in British culture. Following in the wake of the demise of the three-volume novel and the associated change in 'fiction-reading Britain from a borrowing to a buying culture', the

³⁰ C. Bloom, *Bestsellers: Popular Fiction since 1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 37.

American term bestseller entered the cultural vernacular and generally referred to a novel that enjoyed high levels of commercial success.³¹ Estimates varied as to the exact number of sales needed to achieve the title of bestseller but in an early-twentieth-century context where most novels did not justify the printing of more than one edition, anywhere between 30,000 and 100,000 sales could be deserving of the bestseller moniker according to two influential analyses of the literary marketplace conducted in the 1920s and 1930s.³² Detective stories, spy thrillers, comedies, adventure novels, melodrama and romantic fiction sold especially well and catered to the tastes of a vast reading market

The term middlebrow was another linguistic American import into Britain culture and was closely linked to its sister categories of lowbrow and highbrow. Derived from the pseudo-science of phrenology, which suggested that people of low intelligence would possess a lower brow line than someone of greater intelligence, the terms lowbrow and highbrow also emanated from the United States and first appeared in Britain during the 1910s.³³ The epithet highbrow was commonly associated with elite intellectual culture, experimental literary forms such as modernism and possessed a class referent in the form of the professional and educated upper middle classes.³⁴ Lowbrow, on the other hand, denoted a person of limited cognitive ability and alluded to cultural commodities that catered to the predilections of an unsophisticated lower-class marketplace. The first known use of the term middlebrow in a British context occurred in 1925 when the satirical magazine *Punch* proudly proclaimed that

³¹ J. Sutherland, *Bestsellers A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 84.

³² P. Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 638.

³³ Collini, *Absent Minds*, 110-111.

³⁴ Collini, *Absent Minds*, 110-111.

the BBC had 'discovered a new type, the middlebrow'.³⁵ This embryonic category consisted 'of people who are hoping that someday they will get used to the stuff they ought to like'.

A specifically middlebrow literature emerged during the 1920s and gained meaning and currency from its overt opposition to the intellectual pretension of the highbrow.³⁶ Popular middlebrow novelists of the calibre of John Buchan, J.B. Priestley, George Orwell and Gilbert Frankau laid great stress on the traditional stylistic merits of storytelling, character development and the necessity of entertaining and lucid prose.³⁷ Scoffing at the highbrow's distaste for the popular and rejecting the modernist experiment with language, style and form, these authors produced neo-realist novels that celebrated the pragmatism, reasonability and patriotism of the English people. Middlebrow fiction was also closely linked to the rising popularity of book clubs, commercial lending libraries and literary review columns in mass circulation newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Evening Standard*, the editorship of the latter being considered especially influential with Arnold Bennett and J.B. Priestley holding the reins in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁸

Middlebrow has commonly been equated with the anxieties and reading preferences of a suburban bourgeois demographic. Nicola Humble, for example, remarks that a novel can be considered middlebrow 'not because of any intrinsic content but because it was daily read

³⁵ 'Charivaria', *Punch*, 23 Dec. 1925.

³⁶ For this see McKibbin, *Classes*, 478. C. Berthezene, *Training minds for the war of ideas: Ashridge College, the Conservative Party and the cultural politics of Britain, 1929-54* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2015), 156.

³⁷ J. Buchan, 'Superior Persons and Others', *The Graphic*, 128 (1930), 526; J.B. Priestley, 'High, Low, Broad', in *Open House: A Book of Essays* (New York, 1927), 162-167; G. Frankau, 'Writers who spurn love motive', *Daily Mail*, 29 Jan. 1924; 'How we novelists get our plots', *Daily Mail*, 13 Jun. 1933; G. Orwell, 'Politics and the English Language', *Horizon*, 13 (1946), 252-265.

³⁸ J. Baxendale, *Priestley's England: J. B. Priestley and English Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 15-21; K. MacDonald, C. Singer (eds.), *Transitions in Middlebrow Writing, 1880-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2-5.

by the middle-class public-and particularly by the lower middle classes'.³⁹ Research conducted in the newly emerging field of 'middlebrow studies', which often betrays an overt conceptual reliance on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, explicitly links the categories of middlebrow and middle class, pointing to the similitude of interests between authors and audience.⁴⁰ In relation to the middlebrow's depiction of other classes, scholars have largely contended that the form largely ignored or othered working class identities. Alison Light asserts that Agatha Christie's fiction tended to 'play down fraternisation across the ranks and portrayed the lower orders, in rather sparing fashion, as 'uninteresting; their appearances are minimal and carry little narrative weight'.⁴¹ In *Merchants of Hope*, Rosa Bracco contends that middlebrow writers emphasised the apolitical individualism of the middle classes in contrast to the collectivist mindset of the proletarian crowd.⁴²

Such arguments, which mainly deal with issues of ideology and content, say little about the wider reception and circulation of middlebrow texts. Christopher Hilliard has recently sounded a warning about the conceptual pitfalls that accompany treating the middlebrow as a synonym for middle-class social identities.⁴³ Through an examination of the two-penny library movement, Hilliard demonstrates that the best-selling middlebrow novels of the 1920s

³⁹ N. Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 13.

⁴⁰ Bourdieu associated middlebrow culture with the petty bourgeoisie. Uncertain of their place in the social and cultural hierarchy, this class was 'divided between the tastes they incline to and the tastes they aspire to'. See P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 326; for a good example of this theoretical framework in 'middlebrow studies' see M. Grover, *The Ordeal of Warwick Deeping: Middlebrow Authorship and Cultural Embarrassment* (Cranbury NJ: Associated University Presses, 2009), 31-35; For some of the key works of 'middlebrow studies' see E. Brown, M. Grover, (eds.), *Middlebrow Literary Cultures: The Battle of the Brows, 1920-1960* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) K. MacDonald (ed.), *The Masculine Middlebrow, 1880-1950: What Mr. Miniver Read* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); See also the AHRC's Middlebrow Network at the website <https://www.middlebrow-network.com/>

⁴¹ Light, *Forever*, 83.

⁴² Bracco, *Merchants*, 52.

⁴³ C. Hilliard, 'The Twopenny Library: The Book Trade, Working-Class Readers, and 'Middlebrow' Novels in Britain, 1930-42', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25 (2014), f. 113.

and 1930s were read by sizeable working-class audiences.⁴⁴ Hilliard speculates that working men and women may have been attracted by the social settings, visions and realist qualities of middlebrow fiction.⁴⁵ Similarly, for an earlier period, the work of Philip Waller and Jonathan Rose has demonstrated how working-class readers consumed and enjoyed the work of authors who primarily wrote for middle-and upper-class literary markets. To take the case of Marie Corelli, an avowed anti-socialist and hugely popular author of fantasy and romance fiction, publishers originally marketed her work with middle-and upper-class consumers in mind and as a result, did not issue her books in cheap six-penny editions until after the First World War.⁴⁶ Corelli, however, was a hugely popular author in public libraries and was referenced by one working-class autodidact in Rose's study as having a revered place in his London household.⁴⁷ Building on the important work of Hilliard, Waller and Rose, this chapter will demonstrate the complexity of social analysis in both middlebrow and earlier forms of popular fiction and argue that the prevailing ideological message was one which expressed the need for cross-class conciliation rather than separation or conflict. The next section explores the key features and attributes of the champagne socialist character archetype.

II

In 1908's *New Worlds for Old: A Plain Account of Modern Socialism* H.G. Wells provided a detailed account of a Social Democratic Federation rally held at the Queens Hall in London.⁴⁸ Describing it as 'one of the strangest and most interesting meetings' he had ever attended, Wells went on to recall the 'dingy, earnest people' that occupied the floor, galleries and

⁴⁴ Hilliard, *The Twopenny*, 218.

⁴⁵ Hilliard, *The Twopenny*, 218.

⁴⁶ Waller, *Writers*, 789.

⁴⁷ J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 129.

⁴⁸ H.G. Wells, *New Worlds for Old: A Plain Account of Modern Socialism* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1908), 234-236.

platforms, the large array of 'red badges' and scarlet-coloured ties and the striking presence of women with children in tow. The chairperson's seat was occupied by the Countess of Warwick, an aristocratic socialist and high-society heiress. This 'remarkable intruder into the class conflict' was extravagantly dressed, illustrated most pertinently by her 'fair hair' and a 'floriferous hat' which distinguished her from the rather dim appearance of the multitudes. The atmosphere of the occasion reminded Wells of a village fete where the local tradespeople had come to pay homage to the lady of the manor. Obtaining a plea of gratitude from the audience in terms approaching 'traditional respect', Warwick's presence illuminated the ubiquitous nature of class hierarchy and distinction.

Accusations of hypocrisy dogged Lady Warwick throughout her political career. Born in 1861 into an esteemed patrician family, Warwick initially became famous for hosting lavish weekend parties at Easton Lodge, her family seat in Essex, and gained additional attention for being the long-time intimate partner of Albert Edward, the future King Edward VII.⁴⁹ She converted to socialism in 1895 after fierce criticism of a particularly ostentatious ball in *The Clarion* led her to engage in dialogue with the newspaper's editor, Robert Blatchford.⁵⁰ Warwick went on to support a variety of progressive political causes, joining the Social Democratic Federation in 1904, campaigning for the Labour Party in the 1906 general election, establishing funds for the children of striking workers during industrial disputes in London and Dublin, co-editing a book entitled *Socialism and the Great State* with her former detractor H.G. Wells, and organising employment schemes for the benefit of unprivileged woman at Easton Lodge.⁵¹ Despite this chequered record of activism, political adversaries predictably

⁴⁹ M. Blunden, *The Countess of Warwick: A Biography* (London: Cassell, 1967), 39, 94, 130, 166.

⁵⁰ 'Daisy Warwick', in *The Northeastern Dictionary of Women's Biography*: Third Edition, S. Uglow, F. Hinton, M. Hendry (eds.), (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 566.

⁵¹ 'Daisy Warwick', the *Northeastern*, 567.

ridiculed Lady Warwick's devotion to the socialist ideal through reference to her personal affluence and lifestyle. *The Daily Mail*, for example, in April 1906 exposed the falseness of claims made by Warwick in relation to having donated the entirety of her jewellery collection to fund socialist election candidates.⁵² In 1990's *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, David Cannadine asserted, rather harshly, that Lady Warwick 'invariably appeared' both 'ridiculous and hypocritical' to enemies and comrades alike.⁵³ Reactionary members of the peerage derided her attempts at social reform and Labour leaders regarded her as a political liability.⁵⁴

Warwick's mingling of socialist beliefs with the traditional trappings of aristocratic wealth provided the most likely inspiration for H.H. Munro's Lady Sophie Chattel-Monkheim. An extremely adept satirist who wrote under the pen name 'Saki', Munro was renowned for his acerbic wit and biting tales exposing the duplicitous of social and political life in Edwardian Britain. His 1902 work *The Westminster Alice*, written in collaboration with the cartoonist Francis Carruthers Gould, attacked the Conservative government's handling of the Boer War. 'Saki' nevertheless remained a staunch high-Tory politically, employed at various stages in his career for Conservative-supporting newspapers like the *Daily Express* and *The Morning Post*. Munro's 1914 short story collection *Beasts and Super-Beasts*, the title a parody of G.B. Shaw's famous four-act play *Man and Superman*, contained a humorous and sardonic tale mocking the ill-thought-out views of upper-class socialists. In this story entitled 'The Byzantine Omelette', described in the *New Statesman* review as the funniest in *Beast and Super-Beasts*, Sophie Chattel-Monkeim presides over a disastrous dinner party at her stately home.⁵⁵ A

⁵² 'Lady Warwick's Jewels', *Daily Mail* (London) 21 Apr. 1906.

⁵³ D. Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 538.

⁵⁴ Cannadine, *The Decline*, 538.

⁵⁵ H.H. Munro, 'The Byzantine Omelette', in *Beasts and Super-Beasts* (London: John Lane, 1914), 160-168; 'New

moneyed peeress and self-described 'socialist by conviction', Chatel-Monkeim fulminates 'against the evils of capitalism at drawing-room meetings and Fabian conferences', comfortable in the knowledge that the present system, 'with all its inequalities and iniquities', 'would probably last her time'. Her fundamental insincerity and conditional commitment to left-wing political causes is further exposed by statements such as the one quoted below:

As a good socialist, Sophie disapproved of social distinctions, and derided the idea of a princely caste, but if there were to be these artificial gradations of rank and dignity she was pleased and anxious to have an exalted specimen of an exalted order included in her house-party.

Sophie's well-laid plans for a successful dinner are scuppered when her servants and maids down tools over the employment of a non-union omelette specialist. The story concludes with a postscript which informs readers that Chatel-Monkheim, after a hiatus of eighteen months, was beginning to re-enter high society but considered it 'doubtful' whether she would ever attend a Fabian conference or a politically-charged drawing room meeting again.

'Saki' was not the first right-leaning author to employ the figure of the aristocratic female socialist for comic effect. Somerset Maugham's farcical 1906 comedy *The Bishop's Apron* focuses on the machinations of Lord Theodore Spratte, a scheming, mid-level Anglican cleric who yearns for a prestigious bishopric and diocese.⁵⁶ A novelised version of Maugham's produced but at the time unreleased play *Loaves and Fishes*, *The Bishop's Apron* was published by Chapman & Hall and later re-issued in 1908 in a cheaper six-penny edition format

Novels', *The New Statesman*, 4. July 1914, 407.

⁵⁶ W. S. Maugham, *The Bishop's Apron: A Study in the Origins of a Great Family* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1906).

by Newnes books.⁵⁷ In the novel, Theodore Spratte's ambitions are hampered by the actions of his daughter, Lady Winnie, who falls in love with a young working-class Christian socialist from Peckham named Bertram Railing. A rousing speech made by Railing about the rights of labour inspires Winnie to discard the artificiality and 'frivolousness of drawing rooms, dining rooms and fashionable shops'. Adopting the cause of socialism, a creed she mishears as being inspired by the teachings of 'Carl Marlo', Winnie pledges to strive for a world where the injustices faced by the lower orders are put right. This lofty idealism is thwarted by her father who arranges a meeting with Railing's mother and sister, depicted as uncouth, gin-swilling Cockneys who engage in indulgent bouts of h-dropping. Chastened by this experience with working-class manners, Winnie calls off her engagement to Railing and declares herself unable to envision a future living in a 'shabby terraced house' bereft of life's luxuries.

Maugham indicates that Winnie's proposed marriage and conversion to socialism are largely by-products of her youthful immaturity. Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie also explored this theme within the context of aristocratic families. These authors ridiculed socialist characters in a manner that calls into question Alison Light's argument that interwar feminine middlebrow literature disseminated a powerful creed of conservative modernism that largely dismissed politics as an irrelevance, being fundamentally subservient to the attractions of the private, domestic sphere. Socialists in these texts were treated differently to other characters with more conventional political beliefs who were generally accepted as having a legitimate role to play in society. Contrastingly, the expression of socialist beliefs was portrayed as an aberration that transgressed the accepted conventions and rules that governed discussion in polite society. These rules conveyed the impression that all forms of

⁵⁷ S.J. Rogal, *A William Somerset Maugham Encyclopaedia* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 9.

dissent were fundamentally foolish. The existing political system was implicitly accepted in the works of Sayers and Christie. As Steven Fielding has recently observed in relation to Christie, her novels 'never questioned the ultimate merit of the Westminster model'.⁵⁸

In the 1926 murder mystery novel *Clouds of Witness*, published by T. Fisher Unwin and appearing in seven editions by April 1940, Sayers' amateur detective Lord Peter Wimsey leads an investigation into the death of his sister Mary's fiancé Captain Denis Cathcart.⁵⁹ An avowed socialist who regularly dines at the 'Soviet Club, a place frequented by 'unworldly' 'highbrows' and avant-gardists, Lady Mary is described an independent young woman 'obsessed with putting the world to rights'. Wimsey strongly disproves of socialism and casts scorn on his sisters' professed rapport with the labouring classes, exclaiming exasperatedly at the Soviet Club that 'Mary's never had to do a stroke of work in her life'. Mary's political convictions are exposed as ultimately hollow when she immediately repudiates them in the wake of an assassination attempt made on her brother's life by the radical socialist agitator John Goyes.

Lady Eileen 'Bundle' Brent, the young countess who appears in the Agatha Christie novels *The Secret of Chimneys* (1925) and *The Seven Dials Mystery* (1929), is also portrayed as being vulnerable to impulses of a juvenile nature.⁶⁰ 'Bundle' is a fictional exponent of the Flapper lifestyle, smoking prodigiously, driving cars at ludicrously fast speeds, possessing unconventional views about sexual relations and described 'as a red-hot socialist' by her father in *The Secret of Chimneys*. This overt subversion of the traditional standards of Victorian femininity is dismissed by a potential suitor as being tantamount to the actions of a charming

⁵⁸ Fielding, *A State*, 74.

⁵⁹ D. Sayers, *Clouds of Witness* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1926); for the editions see page 4 of the 1958 Gollancz re-print of the novel.

⁶⁰ A. Christie, *The Secret of Chimneys* (London: The Bodley Head, 1925); *The Seven Dials Mystery* (London: William Collins Sons & Co, 1929).

child. Lady Brent is accorded a central role in *The Seven Dials Mystery*, reflective of her older age and more mature outlook on life and helps to catch the villainous Seven Dials gang through an ingenious mix of spying and amateur sleuthing. Christie's equation of youthful rebelliousness with radical political opinions implied that socialism 'was a phase that trendy upper-crust people went through in their early-twenties'.⁶¹ This impression is further conveyed in a scene in *The Secret of Chimneys* where Lady Brent's love interest, the government official Bill Eversleigh, takes a stroll along the Victoria Embankment in London and is reminded of a youth spent socialising and discussing politics with friends in the capital. 'He had been a socialist then and worn a red-flowing tie. Young-very young'.⁶²

Both of these novels received glowing reviews in the popular and periodical press. *The Secret of Chimneys*, published by the Bodley Head and adapted into a stage version in 1931, was described 'as a first-rate thriller' by the *Saturday Review* while the *Daily Mail* remarked that it had been written with Christie's customary 'humour and sprightliness'.⁶³ *The Seven Dials Mystery*, published by William Collins Sons & Co. and going through five editions by 1932, was deemed to be 'excellent entertainment' by the *Bystander* and the reviewer in the *Sketch* wrote of his delight of being 'taken back to Chimneys' and finding himself 'once more in the company of Eileen Brent'.⁶⁴

The popular thriller writer E. Philips Oppenheim presented a far more dangerous vision of the socialist noblewoman in 1920's *The Devil's Paw*.⁶⁵ Originally distributed via the means of *Cassell's Magazine*, *The Devil's Paw* was released as a novel in 1920 under the

⁶¹ G. Gill, *Agatha Christie: The Woman and her Mysteries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 84.

⁶² Christie, *The Secret*, 34.

⁶³ 'New Fiction', *Saturday Review of Politics, literature, science and art*, 140 (1925), 15; 'New Novels', *Daily Mail* (London), 23 Jun. 1925.

⁶⁴ 'Some Thrillers', *The Bystander*, 101 (1929), 338; 'The Literary Lounger', *The Sketch*, 145 (1929), 265.

⁶⁵ E.P. Oppenheim, *The Devil's Paw* (New York: A.L Burt, 1920).

auspices of Hodder & Stoughton, retailing at 8 shillings, and still had pride of place in the renowned publisher's library in 1928 where it advertised at the reduced price of 2 shillings.⁶⁶ Largely unknown to modern audiences, none of his books remain in print today, Oppenheim was one of the most successful authors in Britain and America during the early twentieth century. His formulaic tales of sensation and melodrama focused on the exploits of spies, femme fatales and evil villains, and were generally plotted across a variety of globe-hopping locales. This escapist mix of fantasy and adventure satisfied the tastes of a broad reading public. A 1917 survey pertaining to the reading habits of wounded British soldiers during World War One counted Oppenheim, along with Charles Garvice, as the most highly sought-after author.⁶⁷ The sobriquet 'The Prince of Storytellers' was conferred upon Oppenheim by *Time* after he appeared on the magazine's cover in September 1927.⁶⁸ Q.D. Leavis remarked that novelettes written by Oppenheim and other popular writers such as Edgar Wallace, John Buchan and Rider Haggard were not merely the preserve of the 'poor and the uneducated' but also provided much of the 'private reading material' in high-class establishments.⁶⁹

Oppenheim differed politically from the authors surveyed so far in this chapter; espousing support for trade unions and the labour movement, albeit limited to patriotic iterations that supported the First World War and condemned the pacifism of conscientious objectors.⁷⁰ Indeed, this point illustrates that writers affiliated with the left also employed the trope of the champagne socialist but differed from their more right-wing counterparts in one

⁶⁶ 'Multiple Display Advertising Items', *Daily Mail*, 19 Jul. 1920; 'Multiple Display Advertising Items', *Daily Mail*, 12 Jul. 1928.

⁶⁷ J. McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain: 1914-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). 76-77.

⁶⁸ Oppenheim appeared on the cover of *Time* on Sep. 12, 1927.

⁶⁹ Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1939). 277.

⁷⁰ For patriotic and pro-war elements in the labour movement see R. Douglas, 'The National Democratic Labour Party and the British Workers' League', *Historical Journal*, 15 (1972), 533-552; D. Swift, *For Class and Country: The Patriotic Left and the First World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017); P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism, and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 119-142.

key respect. Whilst conservative authors sought to 'other' and discredit socialists, left-wing writers appear to have been more concerned with dismissing forms of socialism they found distasteful and championing variants they deemed to be of greater value. Oppenheim's adherence to a 'national labour line', defined by its strident nationalism and hostility to German militarism, is evident throughout the duration of *The Devil's Paw*.⁷¹ The novel details the failure of a socialist-cum-pacifist plot to end the war through a series of clandestine negotiations with the Social Democratic Party in Germany. Oppenheim's brand of practical labour politics is evinced by his favourable portrayal of Nicholas Furley, a Labour Party representative who is described as a 'shrewd and valuable exponent of the working man's gospel'. Furley's 'labourist' outlook is contrasted to the 'will of the wisp socialism of the moment, with its many attendant 'isms and theories'. The elegantly-dressed and artistically-gifted aristocrat Countess Catherine Abbeway acts as the central intermediary between the forces of conspiracy in Germany and Britain. A half-Russian revolutionary socialist who proclaims support for Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Abbeway claims her actions are guided by the interests of the international proletariat and steadfastly opposes the sectional policies of moderate trade union leaders. Abbeway's political radicalism is linked to her 'alien' origins in a foreign country; a government official based in the foreign office opines that Abbeway's 'brain developed a little too quickly in her younger years' due to the corruptive influence of Russian dissidents, many of whom were now languishing in Siberian prison camps. Despite a professed distaste for all forms of legal and social privilege, the countess continues to move within the confines of high-society. Admitting that 'birth and environment gives one tastes which are impossible to ignore', Abbeway attends ornate dinner and garden parties, wears

⁷¹ Phrase 'national labour line' is taken from Christopher Harvie's description of Oppenheim's politics. See C. Harvie, *The Centre of Things: Political Fiction in Britain from Disraeli to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1991), 150.

expensive head-dresses and castigates the 'board school education' of socialist contemporaries. She eventually sees the error of her ways and reveals to her Eton and Oxford-educated lover Julian Orden that a coalition of Junker-militarists is the real power manipulating the peace overtures of British and German socialists.

The characterisation of the aristocratic female socialist was evidently suffused by sexist perceptions and expectations. Male dominance was established and reinforced through the literary devices of satire, character relations and narrative resolution. In the *Bishop's Apron*, Maugham repeatedly emphasises Lady Sophia's impressionable nature and portrays her as being especially vulnerable to the Machiavellian plotting of her father and the inspirational rhetoric of Bertram Railing. Authors of the profile of Sayers and Christie upheld normative assumptions about gender by casting female characters in subordinate roles to men. The cold and calculating logic practised by Peter Wimsey in *Clouds of Witness* is posed in stark contrast to his sisters' impulsive belief in socialism.⁷² Political activity for Mary is 'just another in a series of poses' something 'taken up by wealthy young women grown bored with their lives'.⁷³ Lady 'Bundle' Brent, in spite of her wild-child image and apparent rejection of traditional social mores, is eventually co-opted into the domestic realm when she marries the government official Bill Eversleigh. Oppenheim's Catherine Abbeway, the ostensibly strongest female personality in the works surveyed thus far, is saved from arrest as a spy by the efforts of Julian Orden and depends on his good grace to escape capture for the remainder of the novel.

The male variant of the socialist aristocrat possessed a far greater degree of autonomy than his female counterpart. P.G. Wodehouse's comedic creation Ronald Eustace PSmith is a

⁷² S. Latham, "Am I a Snob?" *Modernism and the Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell Press, 2003), 180.

⁷³ Latham, "Am", 179.

notable example of this tendency. The character is one of Wodehouse's most famous, trailing behind only Jeeves & Wooster, and is based on the behaviour and mannerisms of Rupert D'Oyly Carte, an opera and theatre impresario whom Wodehouse had encountered whilst studying at Winchester College. In 1928, the company British International Pictures paid Wodehouse 7,500 pounds for the right to make films based on his Jeeves & Wooster and PSmith series.⁷⁴ Reporting on this deal, the *Daily Mail* commented that PSmith was a character 'whose doings are well known to hosts of Mr Wodehouse's readers in this country and America'.⁷⁵ Appearing in four Wodehouse novels between 1909 and 1923, PSmith is a fast-talking, monocle-flaunting, upper-class public schoolboy who also happens to hold advanced socialist views.⁷⁶ Removed from Eton due to his poor academic grades and perpetual idleness, PSmith transfers to Sedleigh College, a boarding school of minor stature, and quickly makes the acquaintance of Mike Jackson, a cricket-loving adventurer.⁷⁷ Most of PSmith's time at Sedleigh is spent lounging around on deck chairs addressing his peer group by the appellation of comrade. His titular socialism is explained to Mike in the following terms:

I've just become a socialist. It's a great scheme. You ought to be one. You work for the equal distribution of property and start by collaring all you can and sitting on it.

This support for property expropriation bears practical fruit when PSmith forcibly commanders a large schoolroom for evening tea. The pursuit of 'practical socialism' largely

⁷⁴ 'Mr Wodehouse's Film Deal', *Daily Mail* (London), 30 Apr. 1928

⁷⁵ 'Mr Wodehouse's', *Daily Mail*, 30 Apr. 1928.

⁷⁶ Titles and publication dates of the novels are as follows; P.G. Wodehouse, *Mike* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1909); *PSmith in the City* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1910); *PSmith, Journalist* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1915); *Leave it to PSmith* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1923).

⁷⁷ PSmith and Mike's schooldays form the basis of the novel *Mike*.

involved having a comfortable place to retire with friends after a long day of high-jinks and mischief.

The adventures of Mike and PSmith continue unabated after their graduation from Sedleigh. Employed at the New Asiatic Bank in the City of London, PSmith paradoxically balances a rhetorical dedication to socialism with membership of the Senior Conservative Club, an elite gentleman's club inspired by Wodehouse's own experiences at the Constitutional Club.⁷⁸ In one particularly memorable scene in the 1910 novel *PSmith in the City*, Mike and Psmith travel to Clapham Common to hear Mr Waller, a colleague of theirs at the New Asiatic Bank, speak at a socialist election rally in Clapham Common. PSmith is initially unsure that such a place as Clapham Common exists, having never heard of it, and orders an expensive taxi after a light lunch at a palatial establishment in Trafalgar Square. Once at the rally, he and Mike listen to the speeches of Comrade Wutherspoon, who singularly fails to pronounce the letter h, and Comrade Peeble, whose 'profoundest thoughts' were handicapped by a lack of refinement. The meeting eventually descends into violence when a spectator throws a stone at Mr Waller after he has the gall to talk about the benefits of sobriety and temperance. A fight ensues between PSmith, Mike and a group of working-class socialist 'rowdies' before it is eventually broken up by the police. The stone-throwing spectator who instigated the fracas is later alliteratively referred to by PSmith as the 'cloth capped scourge' of Clapham Common.

John Galsworthy, perhaps best described as a left-leaning Liberal author, alluded to the unrealistic ambitions of the upper-class socialist in 1922's *To Let*, the final novel in his

⁷⁸ PSmith's employment in the bank is covered in *PSmith in the City*; For Wodehouse's membership of the Constitutional Club see B. Phelps, *P.G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth* (London: Constable, 1992), 150.

acclaimed series *The Forsyte Saga*. Encompassing three books and two interludes written between 1906 and 1922, with sales totalling over one million in both Britain and America by the latter date, *The Saga* chronicles the fortunes of the Forsyte clan.⁷⁹ Prosperous, commercial, upper-middle-class, and loosely based on Galsworthy's own family, the Forsytes are deeply materialistic and supremely aware of their nouveau riche status, only a few generations removed from humble 'Dorsetshire' farming stock.⁸⁰ Family members are naturally resentful of the privileges, 'not theirs by birth', reserved for those born in the upper classes.⁸¹ This enmity is mollified somewhat in *To Let* when Fleur Forsythe, the daughter of the series main character Soames, marries the aristocratic Michael Mont. The omniscient narrator employed by Galsworthy remarks that 'this young Mont was a sort of a socialist, strangely wise of him.... considering the days, they lived in'. Mont's socialism is described as being 'indicative of that sort of amiable foolishness that grips the landed classes from time to time'. 'Confined to theory' and turned to 'safe use', it did not constitute a credible threat to existing social hierarchies.

In latter additions to *The Forsyte Saga*, 1926's *The Silver Spoon* and 1928's *Swan Song*, Mont's idealism is channelled through the political creed of Foggartism, which advocates a cross-party approach to tackling complex social problems such as unemployment. Gaining a seat as a Conservative in the House of Commons, largely due his fathers' influence, Mont's ambitions are frustrated by the partisan self-interest and short-termism of parties who reject Foggartism due to ingrained 'class hatred', 'jealousy' and shibboleths.⁸² The reality of political

⁷⁹ Titles and publications of the books are as follows; J. Galsworthy, *The Man of Property* (London: William Heinemann, 1906); *In Chancery* (New York: Charles Scribner's & Son's, 1920); *To Let* (New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1922); Two interludes entitled 'Indian Summer of a Forsyte' and 'Awakening' were published in 1918 and 1920 respectively; Figure of one million taken from page 2 of the 2011 Hachette reprint of the *Forsyte Saga*.

⁸⁰ Galsworthy, *The Man*, 19.

⁸¹ Galsworthy, *To Let*, 210.

⁸² J. Galsworthy, *The Silver Spoon* (London: William Heinemann, 1926), 13, 108.

life at Westminster dents Mont's sympathy for the organised labour movement. Referring to the General Strike in *Swan Song*, he remarks that revolution was prevented because 'brains, ability and technical skill, were by nature on the side of capital and individual enterprise'.⁸³

John Buchan parodied the pretensions of the upper-class male socialist in 1922's *Huntingtower* and 1930's *Castle Gay*. *Huntingtower* was an enormously successful novel, selling over 230,000 copies and later being adapted into a 1927 film starring Sir Henry Lauder.⁸⁴ *Castle Gay* had the privilege of being reviewed by Evelyn Waugh who stated that the novel was sure to delight Buchan's 'reading public' and was defined by qualities of 'directness, sincerity and first-hand experience'.⁸⁵ Both novels focus on the adventures of Dickson McCunn, a retired middle-class every-man who finds himself unwittingly embroiled in escapades involving revolutionaries, Russian nobles and newspaper barons. McCunn is the very epitome of petit-bourgeois respectability. The white Russian princess Saskia remarks in *Huntingtower* that:

He is what we call the middle-class, which we who were foolish used to laugh at. But he is the stuff which above all others makes a great people. He will endure when aristocracies crack and proletariats crumble. In our own land we have never known him, but till we create him our land will not be a nation.⁸⁶

In *Castle Gay*, McCunn claims to be a plain-minded and economically-orientated Scotsman who entrusts his vote to the Conservative Party, while admitting that he is 'a poor hand at

⁸³ J. Galsworthy, *Swan Song* (London: William Heinemann, 1928), 45.

⁸⁴ K. MacDonald, *John Buchan: A Companion to the Mystery Fiction* (Jefferson NC: MacFarland & Co, 2009), 2; 'A Film for the World', *Daily Mail* (London), 07 Jun. 1927.

⁸⁵ 'The Books You Read', *The Graphic*, 129 (1930), 173.

⁸⁶ J. Buchan, *Huntingtower* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1922), 310.

politics', and is distrustful of socialist 'browbeating' about the tyranny of class oppression.⁸⁷

These statements relating to the desirability of common sense and moderation form a contraposition to the utopian inclinations of the modernist poet John Heritage. One of the leading characters in *Huntingtower*, Heritage openly expresses affinity with the Soviet Union, celebrates the workers as the only class that matters, and pours scorn on the outdated realism of Victorian poetry. McCunn wonders how a man who has received the education of a gentleman at Harrow and Cambridge can be so naïve and gullible about the abilities of the working classes:

You idealise the working man you and your kind, because you're ignorant. You say that he's seeking for truth, when he's only looking for a drink and a rise in wages.

McCunn's adopted son Jaikie grapples with a similar dilemma in *Castle Gay* when he encounters David Antrobus at an election meeting in Scotland. Antrobus, a militant pacifist and 'devoted votary of Lenin', loudly enunciates 'on the follies of official labour, the threat posed by the formidable enemy of Toryism and the antiquated appeal of the Liberal Party'. His mission 'of whipping alcohol into the skim milk of British socialism' is strangely filtered through an air of refinement and good breeding. Jaikie recalls how Antrobus, a rugby-playing contemporary of his at Cambridge, was once famous for his proficiency in Latin scholarship before the outbreak of the war in 1914. It was still exceedingly odd to 'hear a creed of naked nihilism' being expounded 'in accents of the most scholarly precision'.

It is important to note that McCunn's professed antagonism and poor opinion of the working classes is tempered by the efforts of a Glaswegian street gang named the Gorbals

⁸⁷ J. Buchan, *Castle Gay* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930), 157.

Die-Hards in Huntingtower. The trojan efforts of this gang, composed of Dougal and the aforementioned Jaikie, help to thwart the Bolshevik conspiracy at the heart of Huntingtower's plot and are ultimately recognised as heroic by McCunn. The respectable faces of working-class anti-socialist protest in the novel, Dougal and Jaikie are adopted at its end by McCunn who has no children of his own. He remarks that 'you're fine laddies and I'm going to see that you turn into fine men'. McCunn's sympathy for the Gorbals Die-Hards represents a stark contrast to the manner in which he conceives of champagne socialists, who are deluded and insufferably arrogant, and reminds us that class relations are often quite complex in middlebrow writing. Contrary to the arguments of McKibbin and Light, the working classes could be imbued with significant amounts of agency in these texts, serving willingly in the case of *Huntingtower* with the bourgeoisie in order to further an anti-socialist cause.

A similar sketch of working-class agency is found in Somerset Maugham's semi-autobiographical novel *Of Human Bondage* (1915), which had reputedly sold over 15 million copies by the time of the author's death in 1965.⁸⁸ Readers are introduced to the character of Thorpe Athelny when he meets the book's central character, Philip Carey, whose experiences are based on Maugham's own life, at a hospital.⁸⁹ An eccentric journalist and devoted family man, Athelny is described by Carey as a 'good talker' who 'did not say brilliant things' but who conversed with an 'eager vividness which fired the imagination'. His philosophical nature is revealed in discussions about history, culture and religion. 'He had read a great deal, chiefly delighting in books which were unusual; and he poured forth his stories of abstruse knowledge with childlike enjoyment'. Athelny's aristocratic origins are a source of debate in the novel; his claims to have received an upper-class education at Winchester College are seriously doubted

⁸⁸ Rogal, *A William Somerset*, 172.

⁸⁹ W. S. Maugham, *Of Human Bondage* (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 448.

by the status-obsessed Carey who 'did not feel that his host had the characteristics of a man educated at a great public school'. Athelny undergoes a conversion to socialism in the latter stages of the novel, commented icily upon by Carey as simply adding another layer of idealism 'to the list of contradictory theories he believed', and excitedly speaks of the rich pensions that he and his wife Betty should expect in a socialist state.⁹⁰ Betty, who comes from hard-headed Kent farming stock and shares nine children with Athelny, strongly challenges her husband's claims by stating that socialists are just 'another lot of lazy loafers' who seek to 'make a good thing out of the working classes'. Athelny's proclivity for 'fanciful' theorising and speculative dialogue is contrasted to Betty's credo of independence and 'making the best out of a bad job'. 'My motto is leave me alone: I don't want anyone interfering with me'.

Writers of middlebrow fiction on the left also licensed working-class agency through deliberate allusion to the inconsistencies and fripperies of the champagne socialist. In a similar vein to the example of Oppenheim cited above, this was done not to discredit socialism but rather depended on outlining particularly offensive forms that were felt to be hampering the cause of the labour movement. An interesting sub-plot in George Orwell's 1936 novel *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, for example, focuses on the well-intentioned but ultimately futile efforts of George Ravelston, a Marxist publisher of aristocratic extraction, to ingratiate himself into the routines and rhythms of working-class life. Inspired by Orwell's friendship with Sir Richard Rees, a socialist heir to a baronetcy who edited the left-wing literary journal *The Adelphi* in the 1930s, Ravelston is a tweed coat sporting member of the moneyed intelligentsia who desperately pines to escape from his own class and become an 'honorary member of the proletariat'. He rather spuriously associates his 'poky' four-bedroom in the so-called 'wilds of

⁹⁰ Maugham, *Of Human*, 572.

Regent's Park', which is described as being imbued with the 'unconscious atmosphere of the upper-classes', with the harsh realities of working-class existence in slums and tenements. Deeply ashamed of his privileged upbringing and substantial independent income, approximated at eight hundred pounds a year, Ravelston 'had never learned to get along on less'. Ravelston's authenticity issues are exposed in a notable scene where he and the book's central character, Gordon Comstock, decide to have a pint in 'a low-looking pub on a corner in a side-street'. The smell of sour beer upon entering the establishment immediately shocks Ravelston and reminds him of why 'he always felt like a fish out of water' when he entered working-class spaces. The pub's clientele of porter-drinking women, darts-playing labourers and a lone bar-dwelling navvy inquisitively stare at Ravelston and quickly mark him out as a gentleman toff; 'they didn't see his sort very often in the public bar'. Detesting the taste of common ales and dreaming of Burgundy red wine, Ravelston proceeds to the bar and tactlessly orders two-double whiskies, oblivious to the fact that most 'poorer pubs cannot afford a spirit license'. Ravelston's request is rebuffed by the no-nonsense landlady, who affirmatively informs him that this is a 'beer ouse', and the bar-dwelling navvy who secretly mocks his faux paus. Ravelston's pretence and misunderstanding of the nature of poverty, which is drawn from Marxist textbooks, is exposed by the shrewdness and practical knowledge of these working-class characters.

The desirability of working-class independence is also a theme explored in middlebrow texts that did not employ the motif of the aristocratic socialist. A.S.M. Hutchinson's best-selling 1921 novel *If Winter Comes*, which by July 1922 had sold 100,000 copies in Britain and 400,000 in America and later provided the inspiration for two big screen adaptations in 1923

and 1947, is a notable example of this inclination.⁹¹ *If Winter Comes* focuses on the story of Mark Sabre, an idealistic author and publisher who is unhappily married to Mabel, a snobby and selfish woman who judges men and women solely on the basis of their class background. Ross McKibbin has identified *If Winter Comes*, alongside other texts such as Deeping's *Sorrell* and Son and Robert Keable's *Simon Called Peter*, as being synonymous with a middlebrow 'literature of conflict' predominant in the early 1920s.⁹² This literature was firmly located in 'the angst with which much of the middle class experienced those years'; 'class conflict, whether experienced directly or indirectly, was central to this genre'.⁹³ The strife between capital and labour is usually filtered through the lens of an-ex British army officer who is acutely aware of his status as a 'temporary gentleman'.⁹⁴ In the case of *If Winter Comes*, the battle between the classes is left 'unresolved' because Mark Sabre seeks to see 'both sides of the question' and wishes to remain neutral in the conflict between capital and labour unlike the bourgeois readerships of such fiction.⁹⁵ This even-tempered outlook, while certainly paternalistic and superior in tone, is hardly suggestive, as McKibbin argues, of the 'resentful', 'defensive' and 'anti-working class' mood of the middle classes in the first half-decade of the 1920s.

Sabre demonstrates a strong interest in social and political questions and expresses passionate support for the National Insurance Act of 1911, which compelled employers, employees and the state to make contributions to a statutory fund designed to ameliorate the

⁹¹ For the sales see the article J. Milne, 'What Makes a "Best Seller Novel"', *The Graphic*, 29 Jul. 1922, 170; for the movie adaptations see 'At the Palace Theatre: The "If Winter Comes" Film', *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 15 Sep. 1923, 565; The 1947 version was produced in Hollywood and starred Deborah Kerr. See M. Capua, *Deborah Kerr: A Biography* (North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2010), 44.

⁹² McKibbin, *Classes*, 479.

⁹³ McKibbin, *Classes*, 479.

⁹⁴ McKibbin, *Classes*, 479.

⁹⁵ McKibbin, *Classes*, 479.

worst excesses of sickness and cyclical unemployment in specific industries.⁹⁶ This piece of legislation encouraged workers to develop ‘habits of thrift, forethought and independence’. ‘What you want to help them to is independence, pride in themselves and confidence in themselves—that sort of independence... Well this Insurance Act business—that’s really a jolly good example of the way to do things’. Mabel strongly condemns her husband’s support for national insurance in the following terms:

I should have thought it was only common decency at a time like this to stand up for your own class; but, no. It’s always your own class that’s in the wrong and the common people who are in the right.

Sabre believes that peace between warring foes can be achieved through the recognition of common interests, pursuits and objectives. The chief emollient of social strife lay in the jettisoning of beliefs that ‘offered nothing but damning and blasting’ and the adoption of a positive, inclusive ideal that recognised the commonality of humanity’s existence on the earth. ‘There’s only one life-only one living-and we’re all in’. Sabre’s experiences in the war alter this stance of conciliation by infusing it with avowedly Christian tenets. The spiritual sustenance conferred on humanity by the light of God was the only solution to the overt materialism of the post-war years ‘In the crypt and abyss of every man’s soul is a hunger, a craving for other food than this earthy stuff’.

Hutchinson toys with religious solutions to social and political problems in 1925’s *One Increasing Purpose*. This forgotten novel was a best-seller in both Britain and America and was adapted into a big screen version starring silent film stars Edmund Lowe and Lila Lee in 1927.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ A.S.M. Hutchinson, *If Winter Comes* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1921), 60-63.

⁹⁷ For its sales see Sutherland, *Bestsellers*, 12; For the movie version and its cast see T. Thomas, A. Solomon, *The Films of 20th Century Fox* (New York: Citadel Press, 1979), 442.

It details the fortunes of the three brothers Paris: Andrew, a finance official, Charles, a business advisor and Simon, who is searching for purpose in his life after retiring from the army after the conclusion of the Great War. Simon's desire to attain meaning in an uncertain post-war climate provides the central narrative thrust of the book. He eventually finds it in the form of Christ, the 'common principle of every human being', and becomes a lay Christian preacher. His journey to this end takes in the fractious conditions between capital and labour in the 1920s.⁹⁸ In the early stages of the novel Simon relates to his brother Andrew a discussion he has recently had with a 'sulky', taciturn' member of the working class. This worker, who is employed in a factory with model labour conditions, divides society into two warring camps; the 'miserable conditions' endured by the workers were a far cry from the 'luxurious lives of the Spenders'. Simon mulls over the logic of this argument and ascertains that all this class feeling, 'bitter as acid', is predicated on the materialistic fallacies of modern life. The workers understandably judge the spenders on the outward appearances of their existence; 'floating about in cars...in restaurants... in warm and padded houses' while the worker is left outside 'where the wind and the rain is'. Hutchinson's monist vision is clearly observable in Simon's solution to his problem. The cultivation of human empathy for the plight of the other person needed to be extended to the relations between the classes:

There is no human help, no heart help, and there never will be until the whole idea of help, class to class, individual to dependents, man to man, is not to help class, dependent, stranger solely, but to help humanity largely, mankind as one; the one that we all are, richest and poorest, ablest and dullest, best and worst, strongest and weakest.

⁹⁸ A.S.M. Hutchinson, *One Increasing Purpose* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1925), 183-196.

The espousal of empathy for the working classes in the works of Maugham, Buchan and Hutchinson before the 1930s demonstrates that A.J. Cronin's 1937 novel *The Citadel* was not particularly ground-breaking in its sympathetic treatment of Welsh miners. One major difference between these earlier texts and *The Citadel* relates to the issue of political ends. Maugham and Buchan portrayed working class characters as instinctively anti-socialist. This is certainly not the case in *The Citadel* which is more politically progressive in its aims. One key innovation certainly attributable to the wider social context of the 1930s saw popular writers apply the features of the champagne socialist trope to communist characters. This development largely reflected the growing legitimacy of Marxism and the Soviet Union in governing, political, literary and intellectual circles during this decade. Impressed by Soviet Russia's apparent immunity from the economic shocks wrought upon the international capitalist system by the Great Depression and the related success of its Five-Year Plans, a diverse array of politicians, academics, writers and students, began preaching the benefits of communism as an antidote to the chaos of unregulated, free market capitalism.⁹⁹ Beatrice and Sidney Webb were amongst the most famous of these Soviet sympathisers, visiting Russia in 1934 and lavishing praise on a seemingly on a seemingly egalitarian system that planned production 'for community consumption' and developed 'the health and capacity' of every individual citizen.¹⁰⁰ These beneficial qualities of the Soviet model were juxtaposed 'to the contradictions immanent in the latter developments of capitalism'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ For the influence of communism on intellectuals see N. Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (New York: Columbia Press, 1959); J. Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 79-91; For its influence in literary circles see A. Croft, *Red letter days: British fiction in the 1930s* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990); For 'United Front' campaigns see B. Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 71-111.

¹⁰⁰ S. & B. Webb, *Is Soviet Communism a New Civilisation*, (London: Left Review, 1936), 24; For more on the Webbs pro-Soviet sympathies in the 1930s see K. Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left: The Webbs and Soviet communism, Volume 2* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2006).

¹⁰¹ S. & B. Webb, *Is Soviet*, 25.

Pro-Communist currents also appeared to be very much in vogue at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Organisations such as Oxford's October Club and Cambridge's University Socialist Society became hives of communist activity and infiltration, adopting the tactics and terminology of the popular front campaign against fascism, marching in procession with the unemployed during the famous hunger marches of the 1930s, and perhaps most famously, providing recruits for Soviet intelligence as exemplified by the case of the 'Cambridge Five' spy ring.¹⁰² This undoubtedly exaggerated reputation for political radicalism in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge provided the inspiration for a 1934 G.K. Chesterton short story entitled 'the Crime of the Communist'.¹⁰³

A murder mystery starring Chesterton's famous crime-solving priest Father Brown, its plot revolves around the killing of two financiers intent on funding a new chair of economics at the fictional Mandeville College. The character of Craken, the communist professor of political economy at Mandeville, is initially suspected of the murders because of his record as an agitator in street demonstrations and as he was the last person to see the two victims alive, providing a match to light their cigars in the college gardens. Fiery, excessively opinionated and scornful of the college's decision to take financial contributions from avowed capitalists, Craken champions the class war and proclaims communism's inevitable victory to classes full of impressionable undergraduates.

This fanatical left-wing outlook is tempered by Craken's knowledge and appreciation of social life and traditions in Mandeville, possessing a distinct liking for the luxuries of port,

¹⁰² K. Morgan, G. Cohen, A. Flinn, *Communists and British Society, 1920-1991* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007), 85; B. Harrison, 'Oxford and the Labour Movement', *Twentieth Century British History*, 2 (1991), 248, 263.

¹⁰³ The story was first serialised in July 1934 in *Colliers Weekly*; Edition used here is located in the online version of the book 'the Complete "Father Brown"'. See G.K. Chesterton, 'The Crime of the Communist', *The Complete "Father Brown"*
<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/chesterton/gk/c52fb/chapter48.html> [accessed July 12 2018].

dinner wine and fine cigars. Craken appears to be fully aware of this contradiction declaring at one point in the story 'Oh, I'll take them their cigars...I'm only a proletarian'. The reader is again invited to question Craken's communist beliefs when he advocates for their practicality in relation to capitalist political economy. 'We are the practical people and that's why you're afraid of us'. This reputation for pragmatism and realism is undermined by Craken's personal sloppiness; immediately after declaring communism's practicableness he fumbles around in his pockets unable to find tobacco to put in his pipe and later comments upon his reputation for haphazardness. 'I dare say I do forget details and so on'. Father Brown, the vehicle for Chesterton's distinctive vision of Catholic conservatism, comments on the heretical nature and false doctrines of communism and unregulated free market capitalism, both threatened societal stability because they had seeped into the collective consciousness. They had become 'common and conversational' and therein lay their menace to man and morality. Brown eventually solves the crime through a mix of deduction and careful introspection, declaring at the story's end that Craken could never have murdered the two financiers because of his steadfast allegiance to college traditions. No 'Mandeville man of the old generation....would have begun to smoke, or even strike a match, while he was still drinking the college port'.

The conceit and delusion of academic dons claiming communist ideals was shared by characters in two seminal Agatha Christie novels of the 1930s. Both *Three Act Tragedy* (1934) and *Death on the Nile* (1937) are among Christie's most loved and enduring works, spawning theatre, film, radio and television adaptations, and both feature the exploits of her famous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot.¹⁰⁴ *Three Act Tragedy* was the first of Christie's works to sell 10,000 copies in its first year while *Death on the Nile* was published under the auspices of

¹⁰⁴ A. Christie, *Three Act Tragedy* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1934); A. Christie, *Death on the Nile* (New York: William Collins Sons & Co., 1937).

William Collins Sons & Co. and later re-named *Murder on the Nile* and made into a highly successful stage play in 1944.¹⁰⁵ In both of these works, the extravagantly moustachioed Poirot has the displeasure of dealing with two recalcitrant communists from privileged backgrounds, eventually ruling them both out as potential murder suspects. In *Three Act Tragedy*, the figure of Oliver Manders, identified as a communist by his love interest the aristocratic Hermione Lytton Gore, is immediately marked out as different from the other characters in the story through reference to his 'foreign' mannerisms and moustache. This sense of otherness is bolstered by Christie's narrative voice which comments that there was 'something un-English about him'. Manders intelligence, good looks and youthful appearance mask an ill-temper, a boastful and arrogant nature, and a contemptuous attitude towards organised religion. Other characters such as Lady Mary Gore, the mother of Hermione, declare their sympathy for the spoiled Manders, believing that he is hobbled by an inferiority complex. 'I think that terribly conceited manner of his is a good deal put on'.

This haughtiness is shared by Ferguson in *Death on the Nile*. A young man blessed with desirable features, Ferguson also holds advanced anti-capitalist views and a penchant for tirades about the parasitic behaviour of rich socialites. Poirot remarks of him 'my dear young man...what a passion you have for violence'. This belligerence descends into outright misogyny and class hatred in a scene where he is questioned about his whereabouts in relation to the attempted murder of Linnet Doyle, a British debutante and one of the central protagonists in *Death on the Nile*. 'What's it really matter? Lots of superfluous women in the world'. We get a sense in both of these novels that the communist beliefs of Manders and Ferguson are insincere; their combative nature and condemnation of existing society concealing privilege

¹⁰⁵ D. Saunders & L. Lavallo, *The Agatha Christie companion: the complete guide to Agatha Christie's life and work* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1984), 128,158,442.

and gentility. Manders works for his uncle's firm in the city of London, and in a rather blatant circumvention of his professed communist beliefs yearns to gain wealth and riches. A search of Ferguson's cabin on the steamer Karnak, which provides the backdrop for the plot in *Death on the Nile*, by Poirot reveals the expected 'sprinkling of communistic literature' but also expensive linen handkerchiefs and tellingly, a signet ring. Later on, Poirot reveals that the signet ring had a family coat of arms adorned upon it, exposing Ferguson's true identity as Lord Dawlish. 'Rolling in money, of course, but he became a communist when he was at Oxford'.

The famous war reporter, journalist and popular author, Philip Gibbs, also openly mocked what he saw as the delusional views of privileged British communists in his 1937 book *Ordeal in England*. This work was distributed by the Right Book Club, a literary organisation with close ties to the Conservative Party and formed specifically to counteract the perceived cultural and political pre-eminence of Victor Gollancz's Left Book Club.¹⁰⁶ Connecting the Bloomsbury movement and the 'dreary high-brow articles' of the *New Statesman* with the abstract theories of socialism, the Right Book Club and the Tory-aligned National Book Association targeted the middlebrow consumer market and produced a corpus of literature that 'emphasised moderate, practical and steadfast opposition to the ideological advocates of change on the left'.¹⁰⁷ Both of these organisations were part of a wider political and ideological project whereby Conservatives self-consciously embraced the moniker of middlebrow, employing it as a defensive bulwark guarding against the effete and forward-looking

¹⁰⁶ Green, *Ideologies*, 138-141; for an article on the right book club see T. Rodgers, 'The Right Book Club: Text Wars, Modernity and Cultural Politics in the late Thirties', *Literature and History*, 12 (2003), 1-15.

¹⁰⁷ Green, *Ideologies*, 153.

prognostications of the socialist intellectual.¹⁰⁸ Gibbs' *Ordeal in England* is, then, a notable example of how Conservatives sought to deploy middlebrow values for political gain.

Conceived as a deliberate riposte to the social investigations conducted by J.B. Priestley in *English Journey* (1932) and George Orwell in *Wigan Pier* (1937), *Ordeal in England* comments on the passionate emotions aroused by the Spanish Civil War on both the right and left, the relative contentedness of the British working man compared to his counterparts on the continent and the growing popularity of communist ideals in intellectual and political circles.¹⁰⁹ Gibbs devoted substantial attention to the issue of communism, condemning the fervent reverence of highbrows for the teachings of Karl Marx. This 'old ghost' had written a book, referring to *Das Kapital*, which had caused the 'deaths of millions by civil war, revolution, murder, typhus, famine and all other brands of misery'. Gibbs went on to recall an encounter with one of these communist highbrows, the eminent scientist J.B.S. Haldane. Meeting Haldane at a party, Gibbs pondered how such an obviously intelligent man could ignore the 'cruelties' and 'agonies' inflicted on the Russian people by the Bolsheviks, which far outweighed the contemporary downsides of capitalism. The 'red dream' was felt to be especially attractive to the idealism of youth with Gibbs singling out the universities of Oxford and Cambridge as far-left havens. 'At Oxford and Cambridge, there are ardent advocates of the United Front and passionate partisans of class war'. The Marxian ideal appealed to the impatience of the young mind and its desire to thwart and subvert the conventions of the previous generation, 'at the mere word of communism the family blows up'. Gibbs portrayed

¹⁰⁸ Berthezene, *Training*, 154-165.

¹⁰⁹ P. Gibbs, 'Extract from *Ordeal in England*'. Chapters 6 –10, 110 –199.

http://www.jrbooksonline.com/ordeal_in_england_extract.htm [accessed 11 Jun 2018].

communism as a mere folly of youth, corresponding to a fashion statement that allowed one 'to join the ranks of the intellectuals in Bloomsbury'.

Middlebrow fiction's withering depiction of privileged communists in the 1930s shows that we should be careful about portraying the decade as one of unprecedented social and political progress on the part of the middle classes. Characters, stereotypes and tropes popular in earlier decades continued to be a prominent feature of novels produced for the middlebrow reading market. The archetype of the left-winger with radical political views was not superseded by the middle-class progressive who valiantly promoted the causes of social reform and modernist technical proficiency. Indeed, complacency about England's relative immunity from the conflagrations afflicting Europe during the 1930s is also a prominent theme that can be seen in much middlebrow writing, seen briefly above in the case of Gibbs. This is a theme that will gain further attention in the next section which examines the socialist agitator archetype between 1900 and 1940.

III

In 1909's *The Condition of England*, the Liberal politician and journalist Charles Masterman confidently declared that the crowd was the archetypal 'product of modern industrial civilisation'.¹¹⁰ Urban inhabitants of London and other big cities had become 'accustomed' to living, labouring, socialising and dying in the midst of crowds. The multitude comprised of criminals, loafers, the unemployable, agitators and more reputable types such as the respectable suburban dwelling citizen who streamed into the urban centre from 'tramcars and trains. An aggregation of formerly separable persons, the city crowd subsumed

¹¹⁰ C. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (Methuen: London, 1909), 118-121.

the distinctiveness and rationality of the individual, causing him/her to act differently from their actions 'as isolated units of humanity'. This collective pressure unleashed the instincts of the mob, an 'uncouth monster' who could 'be cajoled and flattered into imprisonment or ignoble action'.

Such trepidation about the degenerative effects of group behaviour in crowds, mobs and the masses possessed a long and distinguished lineage in British political discourse.¹¹¹ These fears became particularly insistent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century due to the experience of mass urbanisation, the extension of the political franchise, the expansion of the state into hitherto privatised areas of the economy and society, the related emergence of interventionist political ideologies such as new liberalism, socialism and tariff reform, and the rise of modern advertising and mass culture.¹¹² The confluence of these factors contributed to a heightened sense of awareness about 'the masses' and their potential responsiveness to ill-intentioned manipulators.¹¹³ Advocates of 'crowd psychology' in British and French universities bestowed an intellectual foundation for such fears, arguing that man yielded to primitive and atavistic instincts in a crowd setting.¹¹⁴ Traditionally associated with movements of the political right, seen as a key influence on the anti-rationalist ruminations of Fascist leaders, 'crowd psychology' also affected British liberal thinkers.¹¹⁵ Leading proponents of social liberalism, L.T. Hobhouse and J.A. Hobson, were both swayed by Gustave Le Bon's

¹¹¹ See E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: J. Dodsley, 1790), 34-35; For an overview of these fears in the nineteenth century see A. Briggs, 'The Language of Mass and Masses' in *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 34-54.

¹¹² Le Mahieu, *A Culture*, 107.

¹¹³ Le Mahieu, *A Culture*, 107.

¹¹⁴ The key works are G. LeBon, *The Crowd: A study of the popular mind* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1896); Wilfrid Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1916); W. McDougall, *The Group Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920).

¹¹⁵ For its impact on Fascist leaders see K. Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28-29; For its effects on Liberals see J. Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of 'Public Opinion', 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 2013), 171-172.

argument 'that congregation unleashed primal forces whose sovereignty was not dependent on the intellectual or class background of its participants'.¹¹⁶ Hobson's famous critique of the Boer War, 1901's *The Psychology of Jingoism*, argued that the British nation, as a collective embracing all classes and creeds, had become a 'great crowd', fatally exposing its 'crowd mind' and succumbing to the repeated implorations of the imperialist press.¹¹⁷

The sense that the crowd was irrational and prone to 'uncontrollable gusts of passion' was shared by Conservatives who made a point of accentuating the ever-lingering dangers of demagoguery.¹¹⁸ As Kevin Passmore notes in relation to the outlook of British and French conservatives, demagogues constituted 'a kind of counter elite'; 'they were too close to the mass', sharing its 'materialism' and 'baser instincts', 'while possessing just enough education' to promote idealistic and 'unrealistic' solutions to complex problems.¹¹⁹ Such judgements were especially prominent in the partisan debates over the terms of the People's Budget and the ensuing constitutional stand-off between Conservative supporters and Liberal opponents of the House of the Lords. Conservative politicians, angered by the confiscatory implications of the Budget's taxes on landowners and brewers and perturbed by the 'Radical-inspired' attack on the political privileges of the 'upper house', continually thrust the rhetorical label of demagogue upon David Lloyd George, accusing him of inciting class hatred and stirring up the envious passions of the 'mob'.¹²⁰ By the 1920's this line of attack was more commonly deployed against the selfish and quixotic ambitions of militant trade union agitators thought

¹¹⁶ J. Thompson, *British*, 172.

¹¹⁷ J.A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), 19.

¹¹⁸ 'prone to uncontrollable gusts of passion' is taken from Hobson, *The Psychology*, 19.

¹¹⁹ K. Passmore, 'The Theory and Practice of Conservative Propaganda and Organisation in Britain and France in the Interwar Years', in C. Berthezene, J.C. Vinel (eds.), *Post-war Conservatism, A Transnational Investigation: Britain, France, and the United States, 1930-1990* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 48.

¹²⁰ For examples see, 'Mr. Lloyd-George's Limehouse Speech', *The Times* (London), 02 Aug. 1909; Mr. Lloyd-George's Inaccuracies, *The Times* (London), 05 Aug. 1909.

to be acting out the dictates of Soviet Russia. Figures like A.J. Cook, a noted Communist and secretary of the Miners Federation of Great Britain from 1924 to 1931, attained falsely-held political power in a half-educated democracy through the means of bribery and fallacious assurances. 'Promising the people cakes and ale in the shape of higher wages and shorter working hours'.¹²¹ The socialist agitator exploited the often-legitimate grievances of ordinary working people, needlessly inflaming tensions between employers and employees in industrial disputes. Preaching the divisive doctrine of class struggle and pledging loyalty to the cause of international proletarian revolution, this stock villain of conservative propaganda appealed to the covetous dimensions of human nature, gratifying the abject impulses of 'envy, greed, hatred, malice and un-charitableness'.¹²²

The political characterisation of the socialist agitator existed in tandem with a literary depiction conspicuous in early twentieth century popular culture. This trope had certainly featured in earlier decades as evidenced by George Gissing's 1886 work *Demos: A Story of English Socialism*, discussed briefly in the chapter introduction, which tells the story of Richard Mutimer, a socialist leader of a mass working-class movement who eventually becomes corrupted by the attractions of money and power.¹²³ True to form for an author renowned for his gloomy outlook on human affairs, Gissing depicts working people in contemptuous terms and criticises their lack of intelligence. Richard Mutimer is described as having no knowledge of literature, poetry, history, a field where he 'was worse than ignorant', and is motivated by a prejudice which teaches him to 'regard every fact, every discovery, as for or against something'. This class snobbery is also clearly visible in a scene where Mutimer's middle-class

¹²¹ 'The Man and His', *Daily Mail* (London), 01 Sep. 1925.

¹²² 'Strikes and the Public', *The Times* (London), 16 Jun. 1924.

¹²³ G. Gissing, *Demos: A Story of English Socialism* (London: Smith Elder & Co, 1886).

wife, Adela, observes her husband sleeping in a train carriage. Surveying his facial features, she mutters to herself that 'it was the face of a man by birth and breeding beneath her'. Mutimer's sordid nature leads him to devise a scheme called democratic capitalism, which revolves around enriching himself at the expense of other workers, and he is eventually killed by a stone thrown by a former follower at a demonstration near the end of the novel.

Demos was Gissing's first commercial success and has become one of his most well-known works, inspiring a movie version which was released in 1921.¹²⁴ Gissing's harsh portrayal of the indigenous socialist agitator ceased to find popular favour in later decades as the labour movement expanded and generally worked with the parameters set by the parliamentary system and the British constitution. In contrast to Gissing, Marie Corelli's best-selling anti-socialist novel *Temporal Power* (1902) takes place in an unnamed European country and consequently, condemns socialists on the continent.¹²⁵ Closely resembling France in terms of its social and political situation, *Temporal Power* focuses on the plight of an initially ineffectual king who, over the course of the novel, learns to extricate himself from the unscrupulous sway of government officials and Jesuit clergymen. Masquerading under the nom de plume of Pasquin Leroy, the king joins a revolutionary socialist conspiracy and takes the lead in a mass uprising that overthrows the corrupt Secretary of State Carl Perousse. Contemporary reviewers of the novel noted the similarities between Perousse, who plots to annexe territory in a small neighbouring country for reasons of financial gain, and Joseph Chamberlain, the sitting Secretary of State for the Colonies, and central instigator of the Jameson Raid. In the *Review of Reviews*, W.T. Stead remarked that it was absolutely scandalous

¹²⁴ P. Coustillas, 'Preface', *Demos: A Story of English Socialism* (London: Victorian Secrets, 2011), 5; A. Goble, *The Complete Index to Literary Sources in Film* (East Grinstead: Bowker-Saur, 2011), 734.

¹²⁵ M. Corelli, *Temporal Power: A Study in Supremacy* (New York: American edition Grosset & Dunlap, 1906).

to 'paint a character so closely resembling a well-known statesman in so many political and personal details'.¹²⁶ A 1903 biography of Corelli even claimed that numerous members of Chamberlain's Liberal Unionist party had sent letters to the author asserting that the character of Perousse 'was exactly like their leader'.¹²⁷

Remaining coy about any perceived resemblance, Corelli stated that the book had been conceived as a response to the 'laziness and luxury' engulfing the British ruling classes at the time of writing.¹²⁸ It was only a matter of time before the 'actual workers of the nation' revolted against the corruptive degeneracy of the governing classes.¹²⁹ *Temporal Power* achieved great commercial success. A 1902 survey of book retailers named it as the top-seller in 18 out of the 23 areas surveyed.¹³⁰ In addition, the publisher Methuen printed 120,000 copies of *Temporal Power's* first edition while the October 1902 issue of the *Bookman* named it as a best-selling title.¹³¹

Temporal Power celebrates the ability of the reigning monarchy to wield determinative power over his 'bitterest personal enemies'. Sergius Thord, the head of the revolutionary socialist committee, is one such foe. A radical firebrand and 'leader of the massed poor', Thord seeks to leverage his hold over the masses to intimidate both king and country. 'A word from me and the massed millions would rise as one man'. His brooding demeanour and 'profusion of thick and unmanageable hair' convey the 'magnetic hint of something dangerous and not to be trifled with'. Thord seeks to abolish the monarchy and establish a republic based on the

¹²⁶ W.T. Stead, 'Marie Corelli's New Novel', *The Review of Reviews*, 26 (1902), 313.

¹²⁷ T.F.G. Coates, R.S. Warren-Bell, *Marie Corelli: The Writer and the Woman* (London: G.W. Jacobs, 1903), 272.

¹²⁸ 'Preface to Readers in America', *Temporal*, iii.

¹²⁹ Preface to Readers in America', *Temporal*, iii.

¹³⁰ M. Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 160.

¹³¹ 'The Literary Week', *The Academy and Literature*, 1580 (1902), 167; 'Wholesale Reports of the Bookselling Trade', *The Bookman*, 23 (1902), 7.

principles of intellectual freedom, universal suffrage, fair taxation and separation of church and state. Reformers of Thord's ilk, Corelli reminds the reader, cultivated the hatred and envy of disaffected groups but never paid heed to the organic connections that bound together sovereign and subjects. 'It is the people who insist on having kings'. This devotion to monarchical rule allows and empowers the king to lead a wave of revolutionary discontent, in the process usurping Thord as leader of the socialist committee that eventually results in the overthrow of the government and the dissolution of parliament. The institution of monarchy remains untouched. By the novel's conclusion, the 'redoubtable socialist' Thord, finds himself vanquished by the 'people's king'.

With its plot set in a European country, *Temporal Power* clearly did not make a point of attacking British socialist leaders and trade union officials. The same cannot be said for the genre of anti-socialist dystopian fiction, which presented a nightmarish, futuristic vision of British society where a socialist political party or movement has taken power. In this genre, socialists generally seize the means of production, distribution and exchange, placing all economic and political power in the hands of the state, decree absolute levels of social equality, abolish private property, and in some cases, dissolve the family unit. The anti-socialist dystopia largely developed in late-Victorian Britain as a critical response to the extraordinary success of Edward Bellamy's utopian novel *Looking Backward* (1888).¹³² By the end of 1890, the *Saturday Review* reported that Bellamy's novel had sold over 100,000 copies in Britain.¹³³ Set in the American city of Boston in the year 2000, *Looking Backward* depicts a socialist

¹³² E. Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co, 1888).

¹³³ M. Beaumont, 'Introduction', to E. Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (Oxford: Oxford's World Classics, 2009), 11.

society where industry is nationalised, economic resources are distributed equitably, and citizens go about their lives not fearing the injustices of material want and class oppression.

Conservative writers such as Alfred Morris, a provincial secretary of the Primrose League, penned titles such as *Looking Ahead! A Tale of Adventure* (1893) in an attempt to undermine the influence of Bellamy's novel.¹³⁴ In the same year, *James Ingleton: the History of a Social State*, written by an author utilising the pseudonymous title of 'Mr Dick', contained a chapter entitled 'Looking Backward'.¹³⁵ Similarly, the prologue of *Red England: A Tale of the Socialist Terror* (1909) is called Looking Backward while the same title is used for the second chapter of William Le Queux's *The Unknown Tomorrow* (1910).¹³⁶ Other anti-socialist dystopias referenced William Morris' utopian novel *News from Nowhere* (1890).¹³⁷ Conceived as a retort to the technocratic and modernist vision of Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, *News from Nowhere* is set a pastoral, rural English idyll where private property, urban industrialism and the profit motive have been replaced by a system of agrarian common ownership which encourages inhabitants to find joy and fulfilment in labour. H.C. Newte's 1907 work *The Master Beast* constituted a reversal of the utopian ambitions of *News from Nowhere*. Morris appears as a character at the start of *The Master Beast*, speaking at a socialist demonstration, and is criticised by an opponent who remarks that his revolutionary plans would ultimately come to naught, being as 'hopeless a task as attempting to make the world turn from East to West'.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ A. Morris, *Looking Ahead, A Tale of Adventure! (Not by the Author of "Looking Backward")* (London: Henry & Co, 1893).

¹³⁵ 'Mr Dick', *James Ingleton: a History of A Social State* (London: James Blackwood & Co, 1893).

¹³⁶ 'Unknown Author', *Red England: a Tale of the Socialist Terror* (London: John Milne, 1909; W. Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow* (London: F.V. White, 1910).

¹³⁷ W. Morris, *News from Nowhere* (London: Longman, Green & Co, 1893).

¹³⁸ H.C. Newte, *The Master Beast* (London: Rebman Ltd, 1907), 13.

Anti-Socialist dystopias portrayed the working classes in menacing terms. Ernest Bramah's *The Secret of the League: A Story of a Social War* provides a clear example of this tendency.¹³⁹ In this work, Bramah, an author best known for his Max Carrados detective series and fantasy stories starring the Chinese raconteur Kai Lung, envisions the potentially ruinous possibility of a Labour government coming to power in Edwardian Britain. Winning an election on the back of 'cosying up to the working classes' and offering them 'a share of other people's property', the Labour-Socialists raise wages to unsustainable levels, place burdensome tax obligations on middle and higher earners and slash funds spent on the army and national defence. Workers are also depicted as being in thrall to a radical, Christian socialist agitator named Ambrose, who leads a mob composed of the 'dirty', the 'diseased', the 'unemployable', and the 'crippled'.

A powerful anti-socialist organisation, composed of elements serving middle and upper-class interests, is eventually formed to oppose the dominance of organised labour. The leaders of this movement, George Salt and John Hampden, are identified as being selfless in their duty to restore Britain back to its former greatness, starkly contrasting to the unrestrained greed shown by the working classes throughout the course of the novel. This so-called 'Unity League' stockpiles coal and oil reserves over a period of two years and eventually instigates a consumerist strike that causes the collapse of the socialist government. Reviewing the novel in 1940, George Orwell noted that *The Secret of the League* iterated many conventional middle-class beliefs about the labour movement and drew parallels between the regime established by the Unity League and the Fascist governments of Italy and Germany.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ E. Bramah, *The secret of the league: the story of a social war* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1907).

¹⁴⁰ G. Orwell, 'Predictions of Fascism', *Tribune*, 12 Jul. 1940, 47-48.

The Secret of the League was however unusual amongst anti-socialist dystopias in that it spawned multiple editions, being reprinted in 1909, 1912, 1920, and 1926.¹⁴¹ Most dystopias failed to garner enough critical or commercial attention to justify the publication of more than one edition. In fact, only *The Secret of the League* out of the anti-socialist dystopias examined in this chapter went through multiple editions, suggesting that the genre lacked popular appeal. The commercial failure of the dystopias also illustrates that virulent forms of anti-socialism which relied on class hostility were falling out of favour in the Edwardian years. This development can also be seen in other genres of fiction.

Warwick Deeping's 1912 novel *Sincerity* failed to find a large audience and consequently, did not appear in more than one edition.¹⁴² This work critiqued the class hatred and small-mindedness of a working-class left-wing newspaper editor and agitator named Samuel Boxall. Waging a press war against the corruption of vested political interests in a small town in rural England, Boxall thrives on the condemnation of those who 'happened to born above him'; donning the altruistic pose of a reformer he attacks privilege with the 'spirit of envy burning in his blood'. Small in stature, red-headed and 'bristling with aggression', *Sincerity's* protagonist, Thomas Wolfe, remarks that Boxall had a 'demagogic' mindset and would 'have screamed and gnashed his teeth at Christ in Jerusalem' or 'exulted with the Alexandrian mob over Hypatia's body'.

This tone of opprobrium towards left-wing working-class characters was a striking theme in a 1912 Elinor Glyn novel entitled *Halcyone*.¹⁴³ This novel was not a commercial or popular success and generated only one edition. Gaining fame and renown in the early

¹⁴¹ A. Wilson, *The Search for Ernest Bramah* (London: Creighton & Reid, 2007), 89.

¹⁴² W. Deeping, *Sincerity* (London: Cassell & Co., 1912); 'Publishers' Autumn Announcements', *The Sphere*, 51 (1912), 7.

¹⁴³ E. Glyn, *Halcyone* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1912).

twentieth century for her output of racy, romantic fiction, her best known work is the 1907 best-seller *Three Weeks*. Glyn's long and arduous relationship with Lord Curzon, the Conservative Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905 and later foreign secretary circa 1919-1924, provides the premise for much of *Halcyone's* story. Disparaged by contemporary critics as superficial and requiring little intellectual application on the part of the reader, *Halcyone* tells the story of a wealthy young American woman named Cecila Cricklander and her efforts to marry into London's high society.¹⁴⁴ As the plot progresses, Cricklander encounters a socialist politician named John Hanbury-Green who has risen to the 'radical-socialist side' of the House of Commons by 'fomenting class hatred', inciting the masses to take up arms against their perceived oppressors in the upper classes. The greed and envy of Hanbury-Green is contrasted to the poise and aristocratic manners of the Conservative politician John Derringham, the sitting Undersecretary of State for the Colonies and obvious fictional foil of Curzon.

The tendency of successful popular fiction to not demonise the British working classes through the means of the socialist agitator trope was also a prominent feature of the interwar years. The victory of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution and the emerging international communist movement gave conservative authors a rich source base to choose from in terms of creating villainous characters. The dangerous Russian Bolshevik entered the realms of anti-socialist popular fiction in the immediate years following the revolutionary upheaval of 1917 and was generally a stereotypical character who tried to trick the working-class labour movement into doing the bidding of Moscow. Set amidst the context of this broader literary proclivity, Hugh Walpole's 1919 novel *The Secret City* was unique for focusing on the events

¹⁴⁴ *Halcyone*, *The Sketch*, 79 (1912), 128; 'Halcyone' *Saturday review of politics, literature, science and art*, 114 (1912), 22.

of the revolution within Russia itself and casting an analytical lens on Soviet revolutionaries.¹⁴⁵

Based upon his wartime experiences working at the Anglo-Russian Propaganda Bureau in Petrograd, *The Secret City* was the inaugural winner of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, awarded by the University of Edinburgh for literary excellence, and named as a best-selling title by the *Graphic* in July 1919.¹⁴⁶

In a similar fashion to the portrayal of the champagne socialist archetype, Hilton made a point of highlighting the privileged social backgrounds of many revolutionary communists in Russia. Referring to the figure of Grogoroff, the novel's narrator states that 'he had constructed a very simple socialist creed in which the main statutes were that everything should be taken from the rich and given to the poor'. Youthful, handsome and strongly built with an 'untidy mass of hair covering his head', Grogoroff loudly 'proclaimed his political opinions to anyone who listen to him, despite displaying a great ignorance of any fact that contradicted his own'. A figure such as his possessed little awareness of the degradations suffered by ordinary people. 'He had never on any occasion put himself out or suffered any inconvenience for his principles, living as he did, comfortably with all the clothes and food he needed'. Such 'tub-thumpers' were emboldened by the events of the October Revolution, 'stamping and shouting on platforms, peddling quack solutions to the problems of soldiers, peasants and workers'. Walpole was confident that the worst excesses of the revolution were ultimately due to characteristics that were uniquely Russian in nature. Possessing little threat to Britain, the country would remain 'isolated in her government, her ideals and her

¹⁴⁵ H. Walpole, *The Secret City* (London: Macmillan, 1919).

¹⁴⁶ R. Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 162; 'Literary Market', *The Graphic*, 100 (1919), 134.

ambitions, and could not be counted as the fulfilment of the hopes of international revolutionary fervour'

Walpole's confidence was not shared by most conservative anti-socialist authors in the years immediately following the end of the First World War. Characters such as Ivolsky and Yulowski, who appeared in the first two novels of Herman 'Sapper' McNeile's Bulldog Drummond series, were portrayed as dangerous foreign threats to Britain's nascent democratic settlement. These novels entitled *Bulldog Drummond* (1920) and *The Black Gang* (1922) were both best-sellers. By 1939, the former had sold 369,000 copies while the latter's two-shilling edition enjoyed total sales of 167,000.¹⁴⁷ Ivolsky and Yulowski are depicted as brutalised figures, especially prone to violence, blood-letting and possessing an undisguised hatred for the bourgeoisie and the upper classes. The extremist political ideology cultivated by 'these ragged-trouser visionaries', in an explicit reference to Robert Tressell's famous 1914 novel *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, is clearly connected to a wild and untamed personal appearance. The 'sunken eyes' of Ivolsky, who is described by Bulldog Drummond as the 'unkempt one', glow with the 'burning fires of fanaticism while Yulowski is portrayed as a red-headed Russian who cruelly smiles and reminisces about his butchery of the Tsar's family in Ekaterinburg.

The lingering threat of Communist conspiracy was a major theme in an early Agatha Christie novel entitled *The Secret Adversary* (1922).¹⁴⁸ The plot revolves around the exploits of a multi-national gang, containing a potpourri of stock Conservative enemies including an Irish republican, an ex-military spy from Germany and a Russian Bolshevik, and their efforts to

¹⁴⁷ J. Meyer, 'The Tuition of Manhood: 'Sapper's War Stories and the Literature of War', in M. Hammond & S. Towheed (eds.), *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 122.

¹⁴⁸ A. Christie, *The Secret Adversary* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1922).

topple the democratic government of Britain. The Bolshevik, a shady character called Kramenin, flees back to Russia after the conspiracy is thwarted by the heroic efforts of Thomas Beresford and Prudence 'Tuppence' Cowley who unlike their Communist nemesis had served with dignity and honour during the First World War. In a further reflection that Christie did tackle political themes in her work, *The Secret Adversary* asserted that the British labour movement was essentially patriotic. In the eighth chapter, for example, the leader of the conspiracy remarks that labour leaders are 'honest' and possess 'faith and belief' in the political system. They were vulnerable, however, to the revolutionary promptings of extremists who urged the 'memories of old wrongs', deprecated 'the weakness of half and half measures', and instigated 'misunderstandings'.

Gilbert Frankau's romance novel *Gerald Cranston's Lady* (1924) also dwelled on the malignant intentions of the revolutionary agitator and offered a similarly positive view of the British working classes through a focus on their patriotic sacrifices during the First World War.¹⁴⁹ Frankau's obscurity today masks the fact that his steady output of two to three novels a year during the interwar decades brought him a large readership on both sides of the Atlantic. Resolutely right-wing in his political beliefs, exhibiting Fascist leanings in the 1930s and a stern critic of Stanley Baldwin's leadership, Frankau established his own imperialist journal called *Britannia*, contributed opinion pieces to the *Daily Mail* and *Express*, and at one stage even plotted to run as an election candidate for the Tories.¹⁵⁰ He was reputedly turned down by one of Baldwin's close allies on account of his status as a 'divorced man'.¹⁵¹ Frankau's image was tarnished by a notorious May 1933 article he penned in the *Daily Express* entitled

¹⁴⁹ G. Frankau, *Gerald Cranston's Lady* (New York: The Century Co., 1924).

¹⁵⁰ G. Frankau, *Gilbert Frankau's Self-portrait: A Novel of His Own Life* (London: MacDonald & Co., 1940), 260, 268, 367, 342, 345.

¹⁵¹ Frankau, *Gilbert*, 270-271.

‘As a Jew I Am Not Against Hitler’. In this piece, he claimed that the outcry over the newly-installed Nazi leader was overdone and that some of these efforts to rid Germany of non-assimilated Jews were justified.¹⁵² Despite a later revocation of such views and his own origins in a prominent Anglo-Jewish London family, he had converted to Anglicanism at the age of thirteen; Frankau’s personal, commercial and critical reputation has never recovered from the fallout prompted by the publication of the *Express* article.¹⁵³

A popular novel, *Gerald Cranston’s Lady* (1924) appeared on a *Graphic* list of bestselling stories in May 1924 and provided the basis for theatre and films adaptations.¹⁵⁴ It tells the story of a mean-spirited mine owner who craves economic success and social prestige. Racked by status anxiety over his origins in the middle classes, an education at Oakham Grammar School he remarks was no match for those educated at Eton and Oxford who were ‘born to power’, Cranston considers his marriage to Lady Hermione Grainger as being conducive to the same reasoned logic as one would employ in matters of business. Awarded a baronetcy after making a sizeable donation to the anti-Bolshevik campaign of the Conservative Party, Cranston’s world is torn asunder when a strike led by the socialist agitator, George Haines, halts work at one of his mines. George Haines is unusual in the context of this chapter because he is English but Frankau clearly others him in relation to the striking miners. His lean face, sallow skin and shifty eyes contrast starkly to the ‘well-nourished bulldog countenances of his.....companions’. Haines, a conscientious objector during the war, speaks of a new world order where the workers are no longer dictated to by financiers, capitalists and

¹⁵² T.D. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656-1945* (London: J. Wiley & Sons, 1990), 137.

¹⁵³ For a short biographical section detailing his family and early life see his entry in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Anglo-Jewish History*, W. D. Rubinstein, M. Jolles, H. L. Rubinstein (eds.), (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). 290.

¹⁵⁴ ‘A Bookman’s Breviary’, *The Graphic*, 109 (1924); ‘Film Version of Mrs May’, *Daily Mail* (London), 13 May. 1924.

employers. 'The war's over and we're done with order'. Initially scornful of the miners for taking the side of a 'Bolshevik conchy', Cranston pulls out a revolver and steels himself to fire at the miners but is suddenly overwhelmed by a moment of intense psychological reflection. Remembering the spirit of self-sacrifice exhibited by the workers during the war years, Cranston realises that the men now facing him in the present were the same 'uncomplaining, haggard-faced warriors who had passed out at his bidding in Picardy and Flanders'. The memory of his 'blood brothers' persuades Cranston to drop the gun and he is resultantly knocked unconscious by a projectile thrown from the crowd. This moment of reckoning convinces Cranston to cast aside his lust for material gain and prompts him to empathise with the plight of the workers. Near the novel's conclusion when asked about the strike, Cranston contends that 'it was much my fault as theirs'.

Gerald Cranston's Lady appeared one year before the publication of Warwick Deeping's *Sorrell and Son* (1925).¹⁵⁵ Eventually going through 41 editions, this remarkably successful middlebrow novel is certainly defined by a strident anti-working class and anti-socialist agenda.¹⁵⁶ Deeping rails against the mediocrity of trade unions, the sectionalised behaviour of the industrial working classes, and so-called 'cabbage-patch collectivism' in the form of socialism, and is open in his distaste for council school education. As argued throughout this chapter, the unreserved contempt shown by Deeping and his novel's protagonist, Sorrell, towards the working classes is rather uncommon when seen in a wider context where most popular fiction actually differentiates between socialist and communist

¹⁵⁵ W. Deeping, *Sorrell and Son* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1925).

¹⁵⁶ For editions see McKibbin, *Classes*, 481.

agitators and the respectful proletarian majority in the labour movement. Sympathy is far more prevalent than condemnation.

We see this tendency clearly, again, in Philip Gibbs' best-selling 1922 work *The Middle of the Road*, which appeared in 22 editions in the first two years of its initial printing.¹⁵⁷ This novel tells the story of Bertram Pollard, an ex-army officer who comes home from the First World War to find British society riven by divisions over labour unrest and Bolshevism. Some of Pollard's social circle, indeed, speak of the working classes and the trade union movement in terms identified by Ross McKibbin. One such character named Lady Ottery remarks that Russian Bolsheviks and British trade unionists both belong to a 'secret cult pledged to the overthrow of civilisation and religion'. Ottery's sensationalist analysis of the revolutionary threat is disparaged by Pollard who declares that it is an outrage to the working-class men who had fought so valiantly in the war. Their restless discontent in the immediate post-war years is understandable in Pollard's opinion because of the scourges of unemployment, rising prices and lower wages. Representing the moral conscience of the novel, Pollard refuses to join a middle and upper class strike breaking body and becomes a journalist, travelling to Bolshevik Russia in the latter stages of the novel with a socialist activist named Luke Christy. Shocked at the famine engulfing Russian society and the brutality of the civil war between Whites and Reds, both Christy and Pollard call into question the human costs seemingly needed to implement communist principles.

Gibbs explored similar themes in 1926's *Young Anarchy*, another best-seller and published four months after the General Strike.¹⁵⁸ Unsurprisingly, industrial strife is at the

¹⁵⁷ P. Gibbs, *The Middle of the Road* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1922); for number of editions see C. Gandy, *Heroes and Happy Endings: Class, Gender and Nation in Popular Film and Fiction in interwar Britain* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2014), 2.

¹⁵⁸ P. Gibbs, *Young Anarchy* (New York: G.H. Doran Company, 1926); for its bestseller status see Gandy, *Heroes*,

heart of this novel but Gibbs again portrays the workers as inherently decent and singles out trade union militants and communist agitators. The novel's protagonist, Rupert Pomeroy, opposes the revolutionary minority he believes are coordinating the General Strike called by the trade unions but concedes that there 'was something wonderful and noble in which millions of men gave up their wages and went on strike...for an ideal of loyalty beyond self-interest'. Law abiding and maintaining discipline, the strikers had 'not behaved according to the code of revolution'.

The transition that Ross McKibbin identifies between the middlebrow literature of conflict in the 1920s and the literature of modernity and social reform in the 1930s assumes a discontinuity that is not borne out by the evidence. If anything, as this chapter has shown, we see a broad continuity in many of the themes tackled by both middlebrow and other forms of popular fiction from the Edwardian period to the 1930s. Measured admiration for organised labour and condemnation of extremists are the dominant features. We can see the continuance of these qualities manifesting with the popularity of books like James Hilton's *Goodbye, Mr Chips* (1934)¹⁵⁹ This nostalgic and sentimental middlebrow novel tells the story of the eponymous Mr Chips, the tradition-loving schoolmaster of the fictional boarding school Brookfield. Although a supporter of the Conservative Party, Chips begins a romantic relationship with the character of Katherine, a radical-socialist, and finds common ground with railwaymen much to the chagrin of his privileged students. His enmity towards class strife is due to his patriotic faith in the English nation. When an American visitor remarks that the

52.

¹⁵⁹ J. Hilton, *Goodbye, Mr Chips* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1934).

General Strike had inflicted massive losses on the country, Chips remarks that it was a 'very fine advertisement...not a life lost- not a shot fired'.

Mr Chips' patriotic invocation of England is given an exceptionalist tinge in John Buchan's aforementioned *Castle Gay* and its 1935 sequel *The House of the Four Winds*.¹⁶⁰ The ominous presence of the revolutionary agitator features prominently in both of these works. Antonin Mastrovin is a communist mastermind who plots to establish a Soviet republic in the fictional central European country of Evallonia. This Ruritanian setting, situated somewhere between the eastern borders of Austria and Hungary, offers a foil for Buchan to explore the conflict between the Evallonian republicans and monarchists. Mastrovin, described as the next 'Bela Kun', is determined to prevent the monarchists, under the leadership of Prince John, from regaining their political power and uses any means necessary to prevent this situation occurring, which include the kidnapping of the figure of Thomas Craw, a newspaper tycoon modelled on British press barons, and taking armed possession of a Scottish castle. A short, very 'powerful fellow' with a protruding 'underhung jaw', Mastrovin's menace lies in his incorruptibility and dedication to the cause of communism. 'He is a fanatic who cannot be intimidated, persuaded or purchased'.

The House of the Four Winds, which sold over 100,000 copies, contains interesting commentary on the growing popularity of political extremism on the continent.¹⁶¹ Buchan is careful to remind readers that political extremism is a continental phenomenon that has little bearing on the political situation in Britain. 'We don't bother about these things so much in England'. This complacency is contrasted to the heated political battles between monarchists

¹⁶⁰ J. Buchan, *The House of the Four Winds* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935).

¹⁶¹ MacDonald, *John Buchan*, 2.

and republications in Evallonia. Kate MacDonald has suggested that the novel's central struggle between these two opposing forces anticipates the Spanish Civil War.¹⁶² The political dynamics of the plot are further complicated by the emergence of a militarised, parliamentary group called the Juventus, who seeks to rejuvenate the spirit of the country. Anti-Communist, anti-democratic and propped up by influential aristocratic and industrial backers, the leaders of the Juventus movement distrust the monarchist favourite Prince John. This quasi-Fascist force engages in violent street battles with their republican rivals, eventually killing Mastrovini at the novel's end.

IV

This chapter has outlined the existence of two prominent anti-socialist character archetypes in popular fiction between 1900 and 1940. The first, the champagne socialist, was generally mocked for holding political views that transgressed the established conventions and values of British society. The second archetype, the socialist agitator, was portrayed as a corruptive, foreign force that sought to exploit instances of industrial unrest and manipulate the normally-patriotic worker into support for Bolshevik Russia. The agitator largely failed in this aim due to the efforts of patriotic bourgeois heroes and their allies in the working classes. Exploring the depiction and characteristics of these archetypes in popular fiction across a forty-year period between 1900 and 1940 has illustrated a number of shortcomings with existing historiographical interpretations. Firstly, the chapter has challenged Ross McKibbin's argument that changes in middle class attitudes towards the working classes in the 1920s and 1930s can be deduced from two supposedly representative texts. By using a wider array of

¹⁶² K. MacDonald, *Novelists Against Social Change: Conservative Popular Fiction, 1920-1960* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 112

popular texts, the chapter has demonstrated that *Sorrell and Son* is an outlier when it comes to middlebrow novels of the 1920s, with most expressing sympathy towards the problems faced by the working classes in post-World-War One Britain. Secondly, the chapter has also questioned the typicality of *The Citadel* for the 1930s and argues that its empathetic portrayal of Welsh coal miners was not an innovation of the decade but had previously been a feature of earlier time periods.

This chapter effectively challenges Alison Light's conservative modernity thesis which overemphasises the apolitical character of interwar middlebrow literature written for women. This chapter argues that the novels of Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers conveyed explicit political meanings, especially concerning the 'otherness' of socialism and its isolation from the rules that governed the conduct of both private and public life. Contrary to both McKibbin and Light, the chapter has advanced an alternative historical chronology for understanding the political significance of popular fiction in the early twentieth century. Rather than discontinuity, and in keeping with the wider contentions of the thesis, it argues for a broad continuity in relation to how the working classes were depicted in popular fiction from the Edwardian period onwards and asserts that privileged British socialists and foreign extremists bore the brunt of most explicit anti-socialist propaganda. This consensus, in its latter years, can perhaps best be seen as a contributing factor to the 'common culture' of the 1930s.

Conclusion

The emergence of a significant political threat vaguely defined as socialism by opponents was very much an innovation of the Edwardian period. Socialist groups that predated the period such as the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party attracted hostility, of course, but neither was felt sizeable, influential or threatening enough to seriously imperil the existing political order. Numerically tiny, the Social Democratic Federation's foray into national politics was utterly unsuccessful with the party gaining no parliamentary seats in the three general elections of 1885, 1892 and 1895. Founded in 1893, the Independent Labour Party fared little better failing to win a single seat at the 1895 general election. As Martin Pugh memorably stated in his pathbreaking study of popular conservatism in the 1980s, the total membership of the Independent Labour Party in 1900, numbering 6,000, was equal to the paid membership of one Primrose League branch in Bolton.¹

The marginal position of socialism would change in the immediate years following the dawn of the twentieth century. The foundation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, the related expansion of the trade union movement after the Taff Vale decision of 1901, the prominence of municipal socialism in the spheres of local government, the election of 29 Labour MP's at the general election of 1906, the New Liberal embrace of social reform legislation, and the Great Labour Unrest between 1911 and 1914 conveyed a sense that something, rather fluidly referred to as socialism, was gaining substantial ground in British politics and society. This newfound prominence provided the basis for a distinctive anti-socialist political culture that has been the subject of this particular study.

¹ M. Pugh, *The Tories and the People, 1880-1935* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 2, 27.

The charges that gradually became associated with socialism throughout the twentieth century first began to have real and substantive political relevance in the Edwardian era. This period witnessed the formation of national bodies like the Anti-Socialist Union, the creation of 'Red Scares' on the part of the right-wing press, and repeated declarations on the part of Conservative politicians that major Liberal social reforms such as the People Budget's were tantamount to socialism. Edwardian anti-socialists criticised socialism for penalising wealth, threatening religion, promoting class warfare and prioritising internationalism over patriotism. These attacks were never merely the preserve of Conservatives but were also conspicuously utilised by Edwardian Liberals, exemplified by their critique of the Labour Party's proposed Unemployed Workmen's Act. Distinguished Liberal politicians such as Herbert Asquith and John Morley opposed Labour's Right to Work bill on the grounds that it was socialist. Conversely, figures in Asquith's cabinet after 1908, most prominently Lloyd George, could also be accused of dabbling in socialism by Tories as a result of their promotion of legislation that violated the formerly sacred tenets of Gladstonian finance.

Indeed, one of the key arguments of this project is that Conservative political dominance in the 1920s and 1930s drew heavily upon the strategies and ideological positions first crafted before the First World War, and deployed most prominently against Liberals. The significance of such continuity has not been sufficiently recognised in the existing scholarship on Conservative anti-socialism. Conservative objections to socialism changed remarkably little over the time period covered by this thesis. The wider context certainly changed in the interwar years, with Tories being forced to respond to Bolshevism, a more militant trade union movement and an avowedly socialist Labour Party. Conservatives, however, were well-placed to meet this challenge, bolstered by their experiences before the First World War.

Conservative interwar ascendancy was greatly aided by a wider political culture that 'othered' socialism and socialists. Moving beyond the Conservative Party sources has allowed the project to demonstrate how deeply rooted certain anti-socialist attitudes, values and beliefs were in civil society, the press, organised religion and popular literature. It shows that any group espousing socialist beliefs in early twentieth century Britain not only had to contend with hostile political parties but a broader culture that was instinctively averse to radical left-wing views. This culture was most popular and successful when it attacked specific socialist targets such as the militant agitator, the impractical theorist and the scheming Bolshevik sympathiser. Outright condemnations of the working classes largely fell on deaf ears. The numerical predominance of the working classes in British society in an age of mass democracy necessitated a subtle, more reformist approach on the part of anti-socialists. Harder forms of anti-socialism, illustrated most pertinently by the campaign against the socialist and communist schools, risked destabilising this dominant approach and failed to gain the backing of the Conservative Party, the most powerful anti-socialist force in the country. This is not to say that rhetoric placing Labour and the organised working classes outside the terms of the constitution was completely absent from this culture, there is certainly evidence in the case of some interwar Rotary clubs, but it was not as prevalent as language that emphasised conciliation and the benefits of class harmony.

The pervasiveness of this conciliatory rhetoric certainly calls into question the influential arguments of Ross McKibbin. Overtly politicised ideological stereotypes that portrayed the organised working classes as greedy, sectional and unconstitutional were certainly not a dominant theme in middlebrow popular fiction, as the final chapter of this thesis demonstrates. Sympathy for the working classes, rather than condemnation, is the defining feature of these texts. The image of the decent and honest worker persisted across

the period. Rotary clubs, too, recognised that the working classes had legitimate grievances in the interwar years and sought to soothe the tensions produced by outbreaks of industrial unrest. The fact that anti-socialist culture regularly invoked the trope of the 'decent worker' contributed to a political reality in Britain, identified by McKibbin and unique amongst European countries in the 1920s and 1930s, where large numbers of the industrial working classes voted 'for a right-of-centre party'.²

Despite its openness towards the claims of the working classes, this culture was never ideologically or politically neutral. Social reform and cross-class co-operation were promoted as means of undermining socialism. Rotary, for example, supported initiatives like profit-sharing and Joint Industrial Councils in order to further capitalist goals and blunt the appeal of socialism amongst the organised working classes. Helen McCarthy's analysis of Rotary underestimates the anti-socialist logic of the organisation and overstates its political progressivism. On a related point, Alison Light's thesis pertaining to interwar conservative modernity also underplays the political themes that infused popular middlebrow literature. Both female and male writers in this genre promoted a careful, often implicit, anti-socialist worldview that denigrated middle-and upper-class radicals and sympathised with downtrodden working men. These texts, importantly, never assumed the legitimacy of movements that threatened existing social and political norms. In this politicised genre of fiction, the status quo is maintained and attempts to overturn the political and social order are thwarted.

What effect did this anti-socialist culture have on the wider development of the labour movement in Britain? On this point, the thesis offers one speculative conclusion. In his classic

² R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 530-531.

1984 essay 'Why was there no Marxism in Great Britain', Ross McKibbin argued that the variegated structure of the British workforce, the associational culture of the British working classes, the separation of politics from industrial relations, the 'ideological predominance of crown, parliament and nationality', and the lack of a revolutionary political leadership impeded the spread of a 'rejectionist', socialist ideology in Britain before 1914.³ Building on McKibbin's work, this thesis argues that anti-socialist political culture helped to shape the character and political practice of the Labour Party after 1914. The resonance of anti-socialist propaganda at certain political flashpoints hindered the development of a genuinely radical Labour Party in the interwar years. The contrived furore over the 'Zinoviev Letter', which infamously caused the collapse of the first Labour government in 1924, further discouraged Labour leaders from implementing and promoting distinctively socialist policies when in positions of power. The perception that anti-socialist opinion was strong, as scholars have noted, reinforced pre-existing gradualist tendencies in the Labour Party.⁴ The party even stopped using the word socialism in election manifestos during the 1920s.⁵ Anti-socialism helped both to moderate and mould the political practice, strategy and ideology of its adversaries.

In conclusion, the decades between 1900 and 1940 were especially challenging ones for anti-socialists as they reacted to the emergence of the Labour Party, outbreaks of industrial unrest and the menace of international communist subversion. Rather than an intellectual theory or a political strategy, anti-socialism is best seen as an overarching worldview that has a distinctive history, deeply rooted in the ideological conflicts of the early twentieth century,

³ R. McKibbin, 'Why Was there No Marxism in Great Britain', *English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), 298-299, 324.

⁴ L. Beers, 'Counter-Toryism: Labour's response to anti-socialist propaganda, 1918-1939', in Matthew Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the Labour Party: Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 233.

⁵ M. Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 150.

and a rich diversity of expressions. This thesis has explored and demonstrated the various strengths and weaknesses of these expressions in the first four decades of the twentieth century.

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